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THE FOURTH HORSEMAN

As Germany's armies are pushed back into an ever-narrowing Fatherland, each liberated area presents its own urgent problems of politics and welfare. Unhappily the direction of our Western offensive brings no early promise of relief to the most sorely tried of all the subjugated peoples, the Dutch. The military effect of the defeat of our airborne troops at Arnhem was fully realised at the time. What we could not then grasp fully was the tragedy it brought to the Dutch people. They roused themselves to support our expected invasion. The railway workers, in particular, risked everything by starting a general strike. The Germans seized this excuse to treat the whole population as rebels who deserved no further consideration from the occupying Power. They broke the dykes and cut the already meagre rations to vanishing point. Even these exiguous quantities are rarely distributed, thanks to the chaos created by the R.A.F. on railways already overworked for military purposes.

Three regions of this little country have to be distinguished. The North, which is mainly agricultural and is not densely populated, is the least afflicted of the three. Then come the great centres of Dutch history and culture: Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague, and the many smaller towns with proud names, Utrecht, Leyden and Harlem among them. This densely peopled region is near to actual famine. A doctor who escaped from it has drawn a vivid picture of families who had no fuel save the furniture they burned, staving off their hunger by eating raw tulip bulbs. In such conditions the undernourished bodies, especially of the children, lose their powers of resistance and disease enters in the wake of famine. Grave epidemics have already begun to spread. What sober observers fear is not merely suffering, hunger and the elimination of the weak, but a mortality that may claim the major part of the population of this region, which numbers some three millions.

The smallest of the three regions consists of liberated Holland, within our lines and under our care. It might be supposed that its plight resembles the unenviable case of Belgium, but it is incomparably worse, because hard-fought battles have raged over it, with a full measure of the destruction usual in this war. Communications have been ruined and there is the same dearth of vehicles, but especially of lorries, which is the universal curse, in Belgium and France, as in Italy and Greece. Rationed food in this region suffices for bare existence. As for fuel, production from the Limburg coalmines is low. The miners have their grievances against collaborationist owners, and there is the usual story of the lack of transport and pit props. But the true explanation of their idleness is simpler. These men, on this diet, are too weak to hew coal.

Holland furnishes, with Greece, the most tragic scene in the painful panorama of liberated Europe. But everywhere, in the towns if not in the countryside, under-nourishment is the fate of all the poorer strata of the population, in Paris as in Rome. The rationed food available in France contains only a fraction above 1,000 calories, while medical evidence reports a sweeping spread of tuberculosis among the children of its cities. The universal resort to the Black Market means that wages are swallowed up in the struggle to buy less than a bare subsistence, while mounting prices threaten a ruinous inflation. Two unhappy political consequences follow. In the first place the Governments that sprang from the resistance movements and the Left are confronted with insurmountable difficulties which are visibly eating away their popularity and their prestige. In the second place, the average man, in Belgium as in Italy, makes the reflection, as inevitable as it is unjust, that in the matter of food and work he fared better under Hitler's New Order. The French face their losses and privations with philosophy. They do not blame the R.A.F. for the ruin it had to inflict on their railways, bridges, locomotives and canals. But fairly enough, they look to us and the Americans for prompt help in making good the damage. They know, moreover, that the world's shipping, including their own commandeered vessels, is under our absolute control. It may have been a pardonable miscalculation that led the High Command to assume last October that the European war was all but won, with the result that it assigned every available ship to service in the Far East. But if we are not prompt in repairing it, we shall pay for the blunder by the alienation from us in the years to come of peoples whose enduring friendship we value and need.

What, then, can be done? Something, of course, is being done. We have sent locomotives and lorries to France, but not nearly enough of them. Homes have been found in England for some 500 children from liberated Holland, and plans are being made for the reception of 20,000 persons from the rest of that country, after its liberation. This touches only a fraction of the need. What France chiefly requires is transport. There are vast dumps in this country of discarded vehicles which could be easily reconditioned. More locomotives, trucks and bridging material should be sent. Secondly, what liberated Holland and Belgium need is primarily imports of food on a generous scale. Every ton we can send is worth two, since it would enable the Belgian Government to cope with its Black Market. As we all know, our Ministry of Food has been provident: it has "Blitz" stocks in reserve, which could be sent to Antwerp, without causing us appreciable privation. We believe too that static Allied troops in Belgium and Holland would gladly accept a small cut in their ample rations for the benefit of the civil population.

The essential thing is that the Governments in Washington and London should realise that army commanders are naturally prone to give a low priority to civilian needs and discover too late their military importance. This danger, vividly illustrated last year in Italy, is likely to recur in the gravest form when the starving area of central Holland is evacuated by enemy forces, whose pursuit into Germany will be engrossing our armies' energies. Mr. Richard Law, in his statement to the House last week, showed that he was aware that an appalling problem of relief may suddenly be thrust upon us, but no Government statement yet made reveals preparation to meet it. The first step is to impress on the public mind the magnitude and urgency of the need, if all the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse are not to ride across Europe.

Final Redoubts

Do the Axis Powers both intend to stage a last stand on territory belonging to their victims? Far-fetched though this supposition may seem, there are indications which give it credibility. In Germany's case it would be wrong to describe resistance as significantly weak in any sector of the fronts; it is as stubborn in Courland, East Prussia and Pomerania as in the fore-field of the Rhineland. But the impression grows that in all these areas the enemy is fighting a delaying defensive: by contrast, on the approaches to Vienna he is launching powerful counter-attacks, and appears to be making greater efforts to keep the Red Army out of Czechoslovakia than out of Berlin. How account for this strategy, or for his continued resistance south of the Po, unless the intention is in the last resort to fall back into an inner redoubt bounded in the west by the Rhine from Basle to Mannheim, in the north by the Thuringer Wald, the Erz and Sudeten mountains, and in the east and south by the Slovakian hills and the Austrian Alps? Within the redoubt would be the not inconsiderable war potential of Bavaria, Austria and Bohemia. Similarly, in the Far East, the Japanese refusal to accept the Allies' naval challenge in the Bonin landings, the unexpectedly weak resistance in Luzon and the non-appearance seemingly of reinforcements in Burma have to be set against large-scale enemy efforts to overrun Kiangsi. If the overseas Co-prosperity territories have to be abandoned and Japan itself is laid open to devastation by Fortress bombers, a drawn-out defensive war might still be planned by the enemy in China, using the material resources of Manchukuo.

Programme for Burma

The rapid progress of our arms in Burma should secure attention for the memorandum issued by the Burma Association, a group which includes most of the Burmese residents in this country. It begins by rejecting the idea put forward by a group of Conservative M.P.s that an interval of something like six years should elapse between the end of hostilities and full self-government. The writers point out that Burma had already self-government, though subject to reservations. This should be resumed as promptly as possible after liberation: there is no case for a return to direct British rule. They foresee the early election of a Constituent Assembly, which should hammer out the constitution of the future Dominion. They deprecate the idea of punishing on any great scale those who collaborated with the Japanese: most of them did so because they had no choice; Japan had few active and voluntary allies, less than 10 per cent. of the population. The promise of an amnesty now would ease the task of our troops. The landlords and middlemen from overseas, whether Indians, Chinese or Europeans, who exploited the Burmese peasants, have for the present vanished. The prosperity of Burma depends on her success in creating an alternative method by which their functions can be performed. All the work, including processing and transport, in creating the two chief items of the export trade, rice and timber, was done by Burmans; but the profits went in a staggering proportion to the foreigners who did the financing and the selling. What these Burmans advocate is that Corporations, controlled and financed by the State, should be set up to organise the rice and timber trades and sell their products. In other cases the State might become the majority shareholder in monopolist concerns.

BEVERIDGE: Full Employment in a Free Society: Summary. 48 pp. Sixpence

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Mr. Wallace's Future

The George Bill, separating the Reconstruction Finance Corporation from the Department of Commerce, has now gone through both Houses of Congress, the Republican attempt to tack on clauses further curbing the powers of the President and of the Commerce Department having been defeated by narrow majorities. Mr. Roosevelt announced early in the controversy that he would sign the Bill as it stood; and accordingly Mr. Wallace, if and when he takes office, will be shorn of the big powers to influence post-war development which would have been his if he had been in charge of the R.F.C. as well as of the Department. It now seems practically certain that Congress will allow Mr. Wallace's nomination to go through; but obviously a good deal will depend on the partner he gets at the head of the R.F.C. and the amount of backing Mr. Roosevelt is ready to give him in face of the certain dead set that the big corporations will make at him on the very first chance they get. Mr. Roosevelt's attitude in such situations is never easy to predict. During the war years he has in effect dropped reform on the home front in order to get backing for the war effort; and he may hesitate to revert to reform lest he prejudice his ability to guide America's participation in the peace. Mr. Wallace, then, may not be able to achieve much, even in office; but he can be relied on to keep the business reactionaries on the jump.

Argentina and Germany

Whatever the formal pretext for it, a declaration of war against Germany by Argentina would be an unimpressive fake. Yet it might succeed in deceiving some people. Public opinion is not well informed about the true character of the Farrell regime, which, besides possessing all the familiar features of European fascism, has close ties with Franco Spain and with the Nazis. When Farrell was forced by external pressure to break off relations with Germany, communications were still kept open via Madrid; nothing essential was changed. Neither would a declaration of war, arising from a carefully staged diplomatic crisis, denote any significant shift in policy. Yet to judge from some press comments on Argentine "hostility" to Germany there are a good many people, especially in this country, who would be only too glad to use this opportunity of diverting attention from the true nature of the colonels' rule in Buenos Aires. This explains the anxiety to support Argentina in her insistence on diplomatic niceties. Farrell and his advisers have already benefited by British fear of United States commercial rivalry. Now they hope to secure the protection of this country in the difficult months that will follow the defeat of Germany; protection, that is, for the State designed as the post-war refuge of fascism! If Farrell thinks that a formal declaration of war will permit Argentina to shelter under the San Francisco umbrella (besides avoiding uncomfortable pressure from the Pan-American Conference now meeting in Mexico City) it is time he was disillusioned—by Britain, on whose encouragement he is gambling. The argument that we are dependent on Argentine meat for our rations is fallacious. Our requirements could be met, at need, by a small reduction in U.S. consumption of meat. Appeasement in South America would be as fatal a policy as it proved to be in Europe.

A New International

There was no doubt about the desire of most of the delegations at the World Trade Union Conference to set up a new Trade Union International; and the British, who had at first wished to attempt instead a reconstruction of the old I.F.T.U., wisely gave way. So there is a provisional executive already in existence, representing all the leading countries (except, of course, Germany), and a further World Conference is to be called this year to bring the new International finally into being. This means that the A.F. of L., which refused to send delegates to sit with the Russians, will have either to come in or to accept entire isolation. The ex-enemy countries have been wisely given seats on the provisional committee; the Poles are left out, like the Greeks, only because there is still no authentic body able to nominate delegates. The committee, besides preparing the rules for the new International, will have the task of pressing for Trade Union representation on all bodies dealing with the conditions of peace and the reconstruction of devastated countries. It, and the more formal organisation which will succeed it, will be centred at Paris—assuredly the best choice. The Latin-American Unions and those in the Colonies and Dominions will for the first time take their proper places in the world movement.

Children's Allowances

There is little to be said about the Bill establishing Children's Allowances beyond what we have said many times already—that the proposed allowances are grossly inadequate. When advocates of children's allowances used to debate whether they ought to begin with the first or the second child, the principal argument of the "second-child" school of thought was that the sum saved by paying nothing for the first child would make it financially practicable to give a really adequate allowance for other children, and thus effectively to improve the position of the large families. As against this, the Government has taken the smallest sum which anyone proposed before the war—when prices were at least a third lower—and proposes to pay even this low allowance only where there is more than one child. A further point is that it is not made plain in the Bill whether the allowances will be treated as part of the parents' incomes for income tax and other purposes. Clearly they ought not to be so treated; and no less clearly the argument that an extra half-crown must be allowed for as the prospective value of allowances in kind is thoroughly disingenuous; for how soon will this half-crown's worth materialise in fact? It is to be hoped that there will be so general an expression of dissatisfaction at the proposed scale of the allowance that the Government will be forced to think again. Sir William Beveridge proposed 8*s.* in addition to services in kind, on the assumption of a rise of 25 per cent. above pre-war prices. Clearly 9*s.* is the smallest sum that can be regarded as acceptable to-day.

Big Business is Pleased

Sir John Anderson has gone a very long way in his concessions to business in the matter of tax relief. New industrial buildings, new and second-hand industrial plant and machinery, expenditure on patent rights, and expenditure on research (including capital expenditure) are all to benefit handsomely; and there are special concessions to mineowners in respect of wasting assets, and to landowners and tenants in respect of farm buildings. The business interests have, in fact, got a good deal more than they expected to get when they trained their guns on the Chancellor; and there is joy wherever company directors are gathered together. In view of the importance both of spending more on research and of heavy capital expenditure in bringing British industries up to date, we are not disposed to quarrel with Sir John Anderson for his "generosity"—though, of course, the remaining taxpayers will be left to foot a heavier bill. What does concern us is the *quid pro quo*. If business enterprise is to be treated thus generously by the State, the State must see to it that enterprise is enterprising, not in entrenching monopoly but in serving the public. The necessary corollary to the Chancellor's tax relief policy is comprehensive control of monopoly practices, public accounting in the matter of costs and prices, public control of investment, direction of new capital expenditure into the channels best suited to advance productive efficiency for the common benefit.

PARLIAMENT: Local Intelligence.

Wednesday morning

PLANNERS with sweeping ideas call the Government's White Paper on Local Government Reform cowardly. The parochially-minded cling trembling to their pumps and call it totalitarian. Willink, introducing Thursday's debate, likened the latter to the "eldest Oyster," who

winked his eye
And shook his heavy head—
Meaning to say he did not choose
To leave the oyster-bed,

and disclaimed any such "sinister intentions" as those of the Walrus.

The best speech of the day, in its outline both of the problem and of the correct approach to reform, was by Messer (Lab.; South Tottenham). He noted that all the associations of the various types of local authority had said, in effect, "Let us have reform of local government, but for goodness' sake don't touch us." He divided services, broadly, into two types—"impersonal," such as the supply of electricity, water and land drainage, which do not touch the individual as such and do not need to be matters of local administration; and "human," such as education, child welfare, and health, in which, although efficiency may demand a large unit, "there is the danger that that unit may be too far removed from the people."

Sir Stanley Holmes (Lib. Nat., Harwich) made a speech which was, as the Chair pointed out, irrelevant, and rather clumsily malicious without being entertaining: he attempted to score a trivial debating-point by quoting, at great length, from statements by Attlee and Cripps before the war. Herbert Morrison wound up with one of his ablest speeches; unlike some Ministerial epilogues, it really did deal with the speeches made in the debate.

On Friday the House provided for colonial development and welfare, for the compensation of local authority employees displaced by war service, and for the use "on suitable occasions," in Northern Ireland, of an embossed seal instead of the Great Seal. This last, explained Miss Wilkinson, will save a great deal of the time of the good-natured wife of the Clerk of the Crown, who has had to spend many hours helping her husband make sets of wax casts of the Great Seal, for the double-sided impression hitherto necessary. Professor Savory (Con., Queen's University, Belfast) confirmed that this reform was, so to speak, pressingly needed. Each seal had hitherto required a full half-pound of wax.

Churchill and Eden, bronzed by the Crimean sunshine, both got rousing cheers when they entered during Grigg's long question-time on Tuesday—and Geordie Buchanan, happening to walk in simultaneously with Churchill, got an affectionately ironical hang-over of the applause; on which he was observed, uniquely, to blush.

Women Members rarely receive (and probably would not wish for) any specially chivalrous treatment. Miss Ward was severely raked by Aneurin Bevan for wasting the time of the House by raising on the adjournment the question of the Government's non-publication of the American report on the British coal industry without pressing for its publication now (a debate handled poorly by Tom Smith, who appeared to be trying to say that he wished the Government hadn't taken the decision not to publish). When the venerable Miss Rathbone expressed concern about recruiting for the Women's Land Army, Maclaren shouted rudely, "You join!" PONTIFEX MINOR

LETTER TO A SOVIET JOURNALIST

DEAR Z,

This week you celebrate Red Army Day, 1945. A tremendous occasion. Many of you will be recalling the contrast with the first Red Army Day twenty-six years ago when your present Allies thought to overthrow the Soviet Republic by subsidising a few Tsarist generals. As I recall the subsequent story of boycott and hostility, I am not surprised that your present mood—if I interpret it correctly—combines confidence with suspicion.

One of your complaints is that the British are slow to face the facts about Hitlerite Germany. Most of you have known and loved people who have been tortured and murdered. Those who have suffered no worse than bombing cannot fully share the feelings of nations which have been occupied by Germans. We can half realise what it has meant when we read or hear the reports of journalists or soldiers who have visited Nazi camps and torture chambers in Russia, in Poland, in France, Belgium and other countries. I have done my best to understand what they have to say. I have just read, for instance, another detailed and authoritative report on German extermination camps. It is a horrifying document which contains, however, no new points except that there were odd German soldiers who were sickened or driven mad by having to do such work; that there were some wretches, doomed themselves to slaughter, who lived a few extra days by helping to murder their comrades; and that in one case a Jewess, stripped for slaughter, escaped her S.S. executioners with the help of ordinary German soldiers. But these incidentals do not affect the main picture, which is one of sadism organised by Germans on a scale unequalled in human history.

If the British had understood the meaning of Nazidom in time this war might have been prevented. Your argument is that, if the British understand now, the next war will be less likely. I do not disagree with this verdict, but I think you over-simplify the issue and misunderstand the attitude of the British public. It is true that the British dislike atrocity reports and that this is partly cowardly, partly the result of knowing that we are all to-day doing things we should have regarded as atrocious a few years ago, and partly just that we lack imagination. But we have another more important reason. We were fed on atrocities in the last war—trivial affairs they look now, but still, for those comparatively civilised days, terrible enough. We recall that those who did most to rouse our emotions about German atrocities were the first to try to jockey us into another war—this time by filling us up with stories of Soviet atrocities. Our experience has made us doubt whether policy is wisely founded on any particular set of cruelties. In any case we are irrevocably committed to ending the menace of German militarism. A few horrors more or less in this surfeit of murder and misery will not affect our resolution—and it may upset our judgment as to what is to follow.

You will not find any opposition here to a drastic policy of German demilitarisation. We want German industry taken over and run for the benefit of devastated Europe. We agree with the policy of shooting those who have ordered these barbarities and setting the remains of the S.S. and S.A. to the labour of clearing away some of the destruction that Hitler's war has caused. But do you dissent from the warning of the World Trade Union Congress, against threatening all workers' standards of living by permitting slave labour? In all our treatment of Germany we have to think, it seems to me, of two points. First how we are to prevent men who are capable of such atrocities ever being in a position to do further evil, and how to make decent life again possible in Europe.

Most official Russian declarations on this matter have been reasonable enough. It was Stalin who insisted on the division of Germany into Hitlerites and the rest, and it is the U.S.S.R., not Britain, which instituted a Free German Committee. No country whose outlook is based on a Marxist analysis, can make the mistake of thinking that our enemy in this war is Germany alone. How many Germans will have survived this war with whom any of us can work on a friendly basis in the future, we none of us know. It has been clear from the course of Soviet propaganda that you began by hoping to find large numbers of friends in Germany and that you are now dubious whether many have survived the terror and propaganda and poison of Nazism. But you are well aware that you must look for some Germans with whom to work after the war, and that Fascism is a disease of the mind and not exclusively of the German mind. Winning the war of itself does not necessarily root out the disease. Though Fascism has many causes, it is encouraged wherever national humiliation, unemployment and frustration can be exploited by people with money and the desire for power. This means that an essential condition for a stable peace is that there shall be agreement between us on a constructive policy for the economic rebuilding of Europe.

You may differ on many points from our diagnosis and our remedies. But believe me when I say that many of us are well aware that the U.S.S.R. has taken the two great steps that are necessary for any improvement in twentieth century society. Without the conception of federalism there is no solution for the national and minority problems. Without Socialism there is no escape from the waste and unemployment of capitalism. But I know that if I am to persuade my countrymen this and to work effectively for closer friendship with Russia, I must be able to reconcile Soviet interests with those of our common people and persuade them that our joint policy is one that makes war less likely and European revival possible. That is impossible unless you recognise that friendship can be combined with a difference of opinion.

This brings me to a distinction, which you will easily understand, between subjective reasons and objective results of criticism. Nothing stands so much in the way of Anglo-Soviet friendship as this confusion. Sometimes I try to explain the Russian attitude to my English friends in this way: If we had been occupied by the Germans, those who were actively resisting would not have readily distinguished between those who accepted German conquest; some would have done so because they were pacifists, some because they were frightened, some because they were pro-Nazi, and some because they were bribed. But afterwards, when the Nazis had gone, we should have known that the differences were of the greatest importance. We did indeed draw this distinction when we were in grave danger ourselves in 1940. We shut up fascists whom we thought really dangerous; we did not shut up pacifists who were not dangerous, nor Communists, though they were at that very time preaching a doctrine that objectively was nearly as dangerous as Fascism. Here we were perfectly right because we knew that the Communists, when it came to it, would, be the leaders of the resistance to the Nazis; and, after the invasion of Russia, our foresight was fully justified.

Now some of your propagandist writers, it seems to me, would have ignored this distinction altogether, and would have condemned in a single anathema all who were uncertain in their attitude to the war, just as they now attack not those who are really hostile to the U.S.S.R., but those who doubt whether some proposals made by Soviet publicists are wise or calculated to foster our post-war alliance. Sometimes your criticism is so ill-advised that I wonder whether you can be deceiving yourselves about British opinion. For that reason I am glad to see Soviet journalists now in this country. I hope they move about freely and get to know us. They will soon realise, if they do not already, that the Left, which sometimes refuses to go all the way with the U.S.S.R., cannot be fundamentally hostile, while the vehement denunciations of everything German and the splashing of atrocities in some Conservative newspapers may be a passing phase that hides a deeply anti-Soviet attitude. You do not need reminding, do you, that it was the newspapers which wanted to kill all Hun babies after the last war, that were ready for war against the U.S.S.R. immediately afterwards, sabotaged all ideas of collective action to prevent war, and went to the extreme limit in appeasing and encouraging Hitler? I am sure you know all this; such ideological shifts are obvious to a Marxist.

THE EDITOR

WHOSE ENGLAND?

THE controversy aroused both in and outside Parliament by the Requisitioned Land and War Works Bill is a political portent whose significance is wider than the immediate issues involved in this particular measure. It indicates, first, the depth of the feeling that this Government cannot be trusted to act in the interests of the majority, but is likely to do what "They"—those interests alien from the common people—want; and, secondly, the extent to which sectional pressures (some socially minded and altruistic, others motived by selfishness and greed) are likely to obstruct even a well-intentioned administration when efforts are made to cope with planning problems piece-meal.

Into the complex executive clauses of the Bill we do not propose, at this stage, to enter. Even before Committee, there is likely to be considerable revision of its detailed provisions. The Bill's general intention, with which we are at the moment concerned, is to confer on the Government powers compulsorily to acquire (at unimproved 1939 value) land and buildings which have been requisitioned during the war for a variety of purposes—military training, construction of aerodromes, hospitals, hostels or war nurseries, billets for troops, R.O.F.s, or (in the case of existing factories) enlargement and re-equipment for war production. The commitments involved are immense. State expenditure on works on requisitioned land has been of the order of £700 millions (including £60 millions on factories alone), and something like 600,000 acres of agricultural land have been absorbed by the needs of the War Departments. Clearly there is need for a Bill to regulate in orderly fashion the eventual destiny of this land and works. Equally obvious is it that there should not be uniformity of treatment. In some cases restoration should be the objective; in others economic exploitation, in the public interest, of resources which State funds have created.

Now, as soon as the Bill was published, there entered the lists against it the "enlightened preservers"—the many bodies concerned with open-air amenities. In their cause, "Critic" broke a lance in the columns of this journal, and their protests filled many inches of *The Times*. Their fears were that, having acquired land—possibly land belonging to the National Trust or public parks or commons—the Government might do with it what "They" dictated. True, owners of land would have the right of appeal to a semi-judicial Commission appointed by the Treasury; but the Commission's functions would be primarily to weigh financial pro's and con's: the spokesmen for amenities would have no *locus standi*; and there was no suggestion that any co-ordinating authority would plan the use of acquired land or hold the balance between the rival claims of farmers, ramblers, Service Departments, landlords and *entrepreneurs*.

There is much in these criticisms. If "They" controlled the Government, there would be a real danger lest enclosures by the State were followed by the re-sale of enclosed land to jerry-builders, holiday camp promoters or other commercial interests, without regard to the public weal, or that precious areas might be retained by the War Office for tank training which could well be carried out in Germany. But the debate in the House last week showed that the opposition of the "enlightened preservers" may be used as a smoke-screen by Tory interests whose real object is to obstruct *any* acquisition of land by the State and to block *any* efforts to plan the use of land or buildings which impair the rights of private property.

This reactionary pressure-group, whose spokesmen were careful to pay tribute to amenities and the need to "restore" the England for which men have been fighting, could not argue that there was no necessity for some sort of Bill. In the absence of fresh legislation, the land and buildings (with all works added to them) would have to be simply handed back to the owner. He might thus be presented, at the State's expense, with a factory costing £500,000 on land worth originally £10,000. Alternatively, if there had been damage, he would receive cash compensation which he might use to support life in Palm Beach, leaving his acres derelict. Still more absurd, if the State wanted to acquire the land or buildings for social purposes, it would have to pay the landlord the 1945 (not 1939) value both of the land and of the buildings erected on it at the public's expense.

To stake such a claim for landlordism doubtless seemed to the Tories tactically unwise. Instead, they have made it plain that in the Committee stage they will insist on revision of the Bill so as to impose on the Commission an obligation to "make good and compensate" in all but demonstrably impossible cases; and they will seek to ham-string the Board of Trade's right to control and allocate de-requisitioned factories in the interests of full employment. The marks of war must be removed; country mansions must be re-conditioned and handed back, even if they are used and still needed for social purposes; England must be "restored." Whose England? The England of property.

Presumably the Labour Party in Committee will be alive to the intentions of the Tory obstructionists, who would be only too glad if the Bill were killed altogether. That rights in relation to commons and open spaces must be safeguarded is essential; this can be done by simple amendments. But no adequate solution of the issues raised by this Bill, nor (we fear) of those dealt with in Mr. Dalton's forthcoming Bill to regulate the location of industry, can be found until the State plans and controls the use of *all* land.

FRANCE IN THE POST-WAR WORLD

GENERAL DE GAULLE has declined, President Roosevelt's invitation to a meeting at Algiers or Casablanca on the President's way back from the Crimean Conference. This comes as the last of a series of disturbing indications of the nature of the General's foreign policy and his view of France's proper position in the world. Swedish journalists were amused and indignant when pompously assured at the Quai d'Orsay, in a cold and hungry bar, that France would maintain her traditional role as protector of the small States. Another indication was the recent article in the Dutch Government's semi-official weekly in London, *Vrij Nederland*. It accused General de Gaulle of wishing to treat Belgium and Holland like a fussy hen trying to collect her chicks under her wings. The Belgians and the Dutch were being solicited to join with France and a Rhineland State detached from Germany and to establish with their Colonial Empires a sort of federation under French leadership. The Dutch weekly rejoined that the Netherlands did not feel in need of French protection and would certainly refuse to enter any European group unless it included England. No doubt General de Gaulle meant well, but his proposals bore an unfortunate resemblance to an attempt to build up a European and colonial group under French patronage as a counter-weight to the British Empire.

This charge is now endorsed by French Socialist critics of the General's policy. They say that he is endeavouring to pursue ancient balance-of-power tactics between Great Britain and "his" Ally, the Soviet Union. Colour is lent to this thesis by the General's failure to follow up the Franco-Soviet alliance with proposals for a treaty with this country, and by his recent broadcast that France would conclude a treaty with us only if we recognised that the Rhineland must be occupied by French troops in perpetuity, and if we ended certain long standing colonial rivalries. The latter are believed to refer to British opposition to General de Gaulle's claim to maintain French predominance in the mandated territories of Syria and Lebanon, instead of acting on the French promise to recognise the independence of these communities. That issue, which is obviously linked up with the question of a federation of Arab States and the position of Palestine, was presumably included in the matters discussed between Mr. Churchill and President Roosevelt at the Cairo Conference. General de Gaulle may have legitimate cause for complaint that he was not invited to attend.

There is, indeed, one common psychological motive behind recent manifestations of French policy: wounded national pride. A hundred years ago, the Italian philosopher-statesman Cavour observed that "French logic consists above all in turning obstinate when the situation changes." A French philosopher of the last century, Jean-Marie Guyau, wrote that the vice of French logic was a tendency to draw the uttermost conclusions from imperfectly established premises.

Both these sayings are as true to-day as when they were uttered: General de Gaulle's prestige and *panache* foreign policy merely draws the logical conclusion from the premise that France is a world power on exactly the same footing as the United States or the Soviet Union. Though France has happily escaped the worst of war's destruction, in terms of population and material (not to mention military) resources, the premise is obviously absurd. But General de Gaulle, representing in this as in most things French conservative, nationalist and military opinion, clings to it with a passionate obstinacy that refuses to recognise France's changed position in the world.

It is up to the British Government and public opinion to help our French neighbours to arrive at a realistic view of our joint position and needs in the post-war world. We can do so only if we start by recognising that this little island, too, although it can for some time enjoy formal equality in world affairs with the two vast world Powers is bound to come off second best in power politics. Great Britain's position in world affairs to-day is similar to the position of France in European affairs at the end of the last war. It was a fatal mistake then of successive French Governments of the Right to adopt a policy which in fact made France the least of the Great Powers instead of making her the leader of the smaller States in an attempt to develop the League of Nations into an effective system of world government based on economic co-operation, collective security and the international pooling of colonial responsibilities.

To-day it would be an equally bad mistake for this country to imitate in world affairs the role played by France in European politics between the wars. We should not share America's contemptuous attitude to the French. We are not merely neighbours but warm friends and admirers of France and French culture. We should give unstinted aid in helping French economic reconstruction. Above all, we should urge that France should not only become a permanent member of the Supreme Council of the new League of Nations, but should be invited to join the counsels of the Big Three on a footing of equality.

Those measures would create the necessary moral foundation for an understanding between our two countries. That understanding, it may be suggested, should be based on mutual recognition of the fact that, measured by the scale of world affairs and by the traditional criteria of power politics, our two countries have become second class Powers by comparison with the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. The conclusion we should draw from this premise is that it is better to be the greatest of the smaller States than the least of the Great Powers, and that we can be

contribute to making peace secure, and reaping for our people some of the benefits of the new social and economic order for which they long, by joining hands with each other. Our joint aim should be to promote the functional integration of Europe. This demands a permanent alliance and close working partnership between the Soviet Union and the West European countries.

A LONDON DIARY

THE American press, I notice, predicts big changes in the technique of radio which are expected to affect almost every household in the States within the first few years after the war. Television (in colour) is to grow into a 1,000 million dollar industry. Even more money is to flow into other new ventures, such as FM (Frequency Modulation) broadcasting and "Facsimile" radio recorders. Both FM and "Facsimile" radio seem to open up fascinating possibilities that have not yet been appreciated in this country. FM radio, which already has had a modest beginning in America, offers a vast improvement in short-wave broadcasting. It is said to raise reception (within a limited radius) up to and above the status of best medium-wave reception, since it eliminates virtually all static and man-made interference while achieving reproduction in the full depth and beauty of the original sound. The other innovation, "Facsimile" radio, is described as a kind of tape-machine or home printing press which, attached to the regular radio receiver, produces by radio a newspaper, magazine or book at high speed. "Facsimile" will provide new stories and pictures, recipes, road-maps, comic strips, short stories and serials; in short, any and every kind of printable material, including advertising. The field of "Facsimile" is expected to go far beyond the scope of present-day broadcasting, since it may extend into business, industry and public services. Indeed, it seems to me that there is no end of new possibilities if radio stations should take over the supply of my daily, or weekly, paper. Public appetite is whetted by promises according to which television sets (which will provide a big detailed fully coloured picture) will be offered for sale shortly after the war for about $200; FM sets will cost about $60 and "Facsimile" radios about $50 to $100. One of the things the American public is also promised is an FM transmitter, which the Columbia Broadcasting System will run free of the advertising which has so far characterised American broadcasting.

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Renewal of the B.B.C. Charter raises the difficult question of the European Service. During the war this branch of the B.B.C. has fulfilled a vast propaganda function, under the political direction of the Political Warfare Executive. When the war ends P.W.E., I gather, is to fade out and hand over its functions to the B.B.C., which will undertake what is described as the "projection of Britain" to Europe. But is the B.B.C. a suitable body to determine the line to be taken in this propaganda, much of which, if it is to be of any use, must be political? There is no analogy here with the Home Service. That, quite rightly, is left independent of immediate Parliamentary or Ministerial control because it is in fact perpetually subject to the active scrutiny of millions of listeners. But how many British citizens will ever know what is being said about them and in their name in Czech and Polish, French and Spanish and so on? And if they do know, what can they do about it?

* * *

The B.B.C.'s motto is "Nation shall speak unto Nation." It still has several millions of almost fanatically grateful and devoted listeners in Europe, and if a substantial minority of them can be persuaded to go on listening, the motto can become a reality. But national propaganda in peacetime is diplomatic dynamite, as the Governors and divisional Controllers of the B.B.C. are perpetually aware. Inevitably, unless they have real authority behind them, they must tend more and more to timidity, to the negative and innocuous. This is, in fact, already happening. Now that the brilliant Frenchmen responsible for the French programme have gone to Paris, the B.B.C. *dare* not talk in French even in the most tactful and guarded way about French affairs. What is national policy about this? Are we to discuss in foreign languages only our own affairs or also those of other countries? But then comes the question who should control it. The Foreign Office? Day-to-day propaganda is scarcely an F.O. job. The European Division of the Ministry of Information? Will it continue to exist? Certainly it will need drastic purging if it does continue. Some one suggests as an alternative an advisory committee of both Houses of Parliament, having access to scripts and studios and able to defend a bolder and more imaginative policy than is possible at present. Whatever the solution, the problem must be faced soon.

* * *

A recent Gallup poll published in the *News Chronicle* promoted Mr. Eden over Mr. Churchill as favourite for post-war Prime Minister. But the most significant point about the poll was that all the Labour personalities are "also-rans," with Sir Stafford Cripps at the top of the list, but a very long way indeed behind Mr. Churchill. Millions of potential Labour voters will be lost unless the Party can decide on a popular national figure as leader and possible Premier. An even more serious criticism of Labour organisation is its failure to seek electoral arrangements with M.P.s and candidates who would make perfectly good Parliamentary partners even if they were nominally "independents" or Common Wealth men. Surely, for example, it would be ridiculous to run the risk of putting a Conservative in at Bridgwater by opposing Vernon Bartlett. In other ways Transport House seems to be making sensible changes. A large number of old men are standing down at the election and young candidates, many of them in uniform, are taking their place. Mr. Morgan Phillips, the new Secretary, is sensible and energetic, and people who call at Transport House now come away without that chilly feeling that used to be so difficult to throw off after a visit to Party headquarters. Mr. Gillies, who has been in charge of the foreign side ever since the last war, is retiring. The Party needs a much bigger and wider-minded person for this post, which often includes representation of Labour at foreign conferences. Further, I am delighted to see that Mr. Michael Young, who has been secretary of the P.E.P., and is a young Socialist with ideas, ability and drive, has been taken on as Research Secretary.

* * *

Well, there is to be a new Trade Union International. I hope that the "Continuation Committee" which the Conference set up to draft the final plans will take up the interesting proposal made by the Canadian delegates, who want the new organisation to include an "International Information Service." They argue that to reach a formal agreement between the leaders of different delegations is one thing and to make the rank and file of their movements understand what is done in their name is quite a different kettle of fish. More than an exchange of news of working class or trade-union interest is needed. The International will need a publicity centre which can arrange the distribution of exhibitions, photographs, charts, films and all the other modern publicity devices. I found myself wondering, as I climbed on to a bus after I left the Conference last week, how much the conductor—who was wearing his union badge—knew or cared about the discussions I had just heard. But if we had the means of telling him what his fellow-busmen in Mexico or Cuba or Calcutta were doing, we should be helping to further real international unity as effectively as any formal agreement does.

When the Films Council Report was published last August, a good many people were anxious whether this indictment of the grip of monopoly on the British film industry would remain just another of those excellent investigations which endorse criticism of Government policy, but are never again referred to in respectable company. Months ago, Mr. Dalton gave a pledge that Mr. Rank would not be permitted to secure control of any further sections of the industry. But in spite of this Mr. Rank has recently acquired the Denham laboratories, whilst nothing seems to have been done to give effect to the proposals of the Films Council. The Association of Scientific Workers has very rightly taken up this matter again with Mr. Dalton. It is most concerned lest the monopoly should soon extend to educational films. Whatever the merits of Mr. Rank's case in the commercial field—and I am not particularly impressed by it—the excellent experience that has been gained during the war by the M.O.I. and the various Services should not be thrown away. We have discovered just how valuable the film is as an educational instrument and everything should be done to extend its use in schools and other forms of education. But that is only possible or desirable if it is done by the proper authorities.

* * *

The B.B.C. does not often make such frightful gaffs as the comparison between Dresden and Sheffield! Dresden was one of the most beautiful European cities and it has been, whatever we think of German culture, one of the centres of our common civilisation. If its destruction was a military necessity, it was a tragedy, not a matter for rejoicing. There will not be many of Europe's fine cities left after the war. Vienna? The Nazis look like fighting there. Rumour now says that even Prague, that gem among cities, is mined by the Germans.

* * *

It is now suggested that a spy was responsible for the failure of the imaginative and heroic airborne exploit at Arnhem. If so, it is doubtful if any spy ever did so much damage to the world. For Arnhem might have ended the war last autumn. In that case the lives of many thousands of brave men would have been spared; the starvation of Holland and much of Europe would have been avoided; the tragedy of the Greek war would not have occurred. But it's useless to prolong the list. We were not wrong in expecting victory in 1944; it just eluded us.

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Municipal Logic

The shortage of buildings in this country is likely to last at least thirty years.

The German bombing of beautiful buildings in Bath and Exeter was deplorable vandalism.

Therefore the Town Council of Hove propose to pull down their Regency terraces. CRITIC

THIS ENGLAND

A 5/- prize for the first entry in this column goes to M. Jellicoe.

Paste entries on postcard or slip of paper and give details of origin. Address to THIS ENGLAND, 10 Great Turnstile, W.C.1.

Prices in the cemetery which is to be consecrated by the Bishop of Chichester, will be (approximately): First class, 30s.; second class 26s.; third class 18s. —Report in *Daily Mirror*.

Unique pair men's sock suspenders, elastic and 14ct. gold, engine turned, made by Cartier, New York: cost £20. What offers?—Advt. in *The Times*.

I endorse our Library Committee's ban on the book "Britons in Spain." We have, as yet, no local "E.L.A.S." that needs inspiration and we don't want any advice from professors as to what we ought to read.—Letter in *Liverpool Echo*.

FRONTIERS IN AFRICA

THE recent creation of a Central African Council to co-ordinate certain of the affairs of Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, may seem a minor enough happening amid the great events of these days—a slight juggling with administration in the dark heart of Africa. But there is more to it than that. Not only are vital aspects of British imperial policy involved, but new processes of change are fermenting in Africa which are bound to result in many "frontier" adjustments—and perhaps much friction—in the days to come.

Things have moved fast and far since the nineteenth century, when the Great Powers of that time scrambled for Africa. They cut her up between themselves, drawing frontiers as it suited them, but without regard to history, geography or ethnography. According to circumstance they made treaties with the local populations, or else conquered them and imposed their will. As a result the map of Africa to-day makes no sense at all. Different nations rule different bits, divided from each other by lines too straight to be natural. Territories which are obviously one economic unit are cut artificially into two; and immense areas with nothing in common are artificially welded into one. Tribes are split up not only between different administrations, but between different flags; and the present status and development of two neighbouring peoples may be at a monstrous variance.

Modern techniques, even before the war, were beginning to make nonsense of this situation. The war has revealed it to be so absurd that it has begun to break down. It was necessary to transport war material across Africa; roads and airports had to be built regardless of frontiers making fictitious lines across desert and jungle. Foodstuffs and materials were urgently required; the arrangements for collecting and transporting them had to be made uniformly for the whole area of production, irrespective of political boundaries. Co-ordinating machinery of all kinds has been set up—a special Minister of State for West Africa; a Middle East Supply Council; an East African Supply Council; and General Smuts has put forward feelers for an African Council from the Cape to the Congo.

The movement to override old boundaries in Africa is well under way, and will require a great deal of watching in the coming years. Common sense will acclaim it as a desirable thing—politically, economically, technically. Why *not* amalgamate the two Rhodesias, and incorporate little Nyasaland with them? Why *not* join Kenya and Uganda and Tanganyika into one sensible-sized British territory to form a happy new East African Dominion? Why *not* allow the three small territories, Basutoland, Swaziland and Bechuanaland—two of them wedged right in the heart of the Union—to be transferred to South Africa, instead of obstinately insisting on administering them from Whitehall? Here are three frontier problems in Africa, which are at this moment creating irritations and agitations. They concern lands wholly within the British Empire, and their settlement might have been expected to pass almost unnoticed in the outside world.

Yet, in each of these instances, the shift of frontiers raises such grave issues that progressive thought in Britain has in the past opposed the change. The reason is that in each of these three groups of territories there is a dominant group of Europeans who, under any union, would exercise sway over many million more Africans in a sense hostile to British ideals. The transfer of the three Protectorates to South Africa is opposed because it would mean handing yet another million Africans over to S. African native policy. It would be the grossest betrayal if we were to agree to do this without consulting the African populations, who have already voiced their opposition to transfer in no uncertain terms. The amalgamation of the Rhodesias is impeded for similar reasons. S. Rhodesia—now a semi-Dominion—has adopted a native policy which is antipathetic to British professions. But in any amalgamation S. Rhodesia would be the dominant partner; she is the richer territory, with the larger European community. It would mean handing over the British-protected Africans of the north to be dealt with as the south thought fit. Again, in East Africa, the Kenya settlers are feared by the Africans of the neighbouring lands. In Uganda, next door, there is an African king with his own Parliament and a developed system of native authorities and native power. Tanganyika happens to be a Mandate, so that here international obligations are involved; in addition, African institutions have been fostered and have flourished more successfully than in Kenya. The Africans of both these countries would fight bitterly against any union with Kenya.

Can we say "No" forever? Even in spite of technical progress and all the claims of economic common sense, it might have been possible to do this (at least until we were satisfied about the native policies of the Union and of S. Rhodesia, and about the intentions of the Kenya settlers) if we ourselves had had a clear conscience. Unfortunately, we have done so little to raise the standard of living in the central African lands, and shown so little imagination in their administration, that to-day the dominant groups opposing us can claim, with pride, that in point of fact *their* African populations enjoy better wages, better social services, better amenities of all sorts, than do the Africans under British rule. This may not have been altogether our fault, nor altogether the result of their altruism. The lands where European settlement has flourished are naturally the wealthier ones, with rich mines or fertile soil; and it has been much easier for them to provide better conditions. Nevertheless, these are the facts.

Must we then say "yes" to the claimants, betray treaties and trusts, and allow millions of African citizens to be handed over to European minorities? This is also impossible. Somehow we must combine the relative political protection which British control affords the African, with the economic advance which depends on local co-ordination and a sensible frontier arrangement. The new Central African Council indicates one way in which this may be done. It will be a standing Council, with its own permanent secretariat; it will provide for consultation between the two Rhodesias and Nyasaland, on such matters as communications, labour, agriculture, health, research, industrial development and economic relations; and permanent standing committees will be established on these special subjects. But there will be latitude for each unit in many aspects of its internal life. Such a system may point the way out in the S. African problem as well. There too, it may be possible to set up a Joint Council for the co-ordination of the many services and problems which the Union shares with the three British Protectorates, while still retaining the distinctive political systems and the relative absence of colour discrimination which these peoples have enjoyed under direct British rule. And similarly in East Africa. There is no reason why economic development of that vast area should be held up by obstinate adherence to artificial boundaries, if the protection of the African institutions and liberties of Tanganyika and Uganda could be preserved at the same time.

Africa can no longer be looked upon to-day as a mere happy hunting-ground for missionaries and explorers, traders and anthropologists, or a laboratory for rival political theories. Nor can we be content merely to fulminate against the evils of colonial exploitation and subjection—necessary and important as this is at times. To-day it is a question of working out the actual *machinery*—political and economic—whereby the peoples may build up a decent standard of life and enjoy the freedom which should be the heritage of all mankind. Ahead of us are the practical problems of frontiers and constitutions and ownership of minerals and development of secondary industries, and health and education—very much the same problems, in fact, as those of Europe or any other continent.

RITA HINDEN

THE COUNTRYSIDE

IN his book, *The Church and the Rural Community*, the Rev. J. V. L. Casserley says that to the countryman Nature is "an awe-inspiring adversary with which he wrestles as Jacob wrestled thro' the night at Peniel, in which he sees God face to face and by which his life is preserved."

This sounds grand, but does not correspond with anything in my experience. For four years I have spent the greater part of my time in what Beach Thomas has called "the complete country," in a small village of fewer than four hundred inhabitants, three miles from a railway station, five miles from the nearest market town, with a motor bus only on Saturdays. The villagers are nearly all land workers, and here, if anywhere, it might be supposed that one would find the distinctive rural outlook and character so dear to the writers of sentimental country books.

I have come to know my neighbours very well, not only in many gossips in the excellent village inn, but also with the interchange of little services that are the basis of all good companionship, and I have not discovered any fundamental spiritual differences between them and men living in similar economic conditions in the towns.

John Dos Passos says that "when you try to find people, always in the end it comes down to somebody." There are in the village many "somebodies," each a definite individual and each with a counterpart to be found among urban workers.

One of my neighbours has something of the character of the typical French peasant. He is almost inhumanly industrious, expert in half a dozen crafts, thrifty, self-sufficient, the complete individualist with no interest in the life of the community. He is the spiritual kin of the small struggling town shopkeeper, and utterly unlike another of my friends who is equally industrious and very shrewd, but is a devil-may-care fellow, who is the life and soul of every party. And in this small community there are a dozen other different types.

To them all the field is their factory, and they no more "see God face to face" when they are ploughing, as Mr. Casserley supposes, than the cotton operative sees Him face to face when he goes to work in the mill.

Mr. G. H. Gardiner, the author of that very pleasant book, *Your Village and Mine*, declares that "pride of place" is "inherent in most country folk." I have not found any such pride. The village is very beautifully situated, but few if any of its people seem to feel its beauty. Rider Haggard wrote of the English country workers: "Nature has little meaning for most of them and no charm. . . . Nature, in my experience, only appeals to the truly educated." And in the village school and in the *plus* eleven school in the nearest town there is no attempt at the "true education" that might help the man, whose work is the open countryside, to feel the beauty of his surroundings.

Beach Thomas writes in *The Way of a Countryman*: "One great advantage of living in the complete country where there are no bought amusements, is that you are never bored." But Beach Thomas has books and many intellectual resources. My neighbours have no such resources, and the younger of them are often most mischievously bored. Our village green is a pathetic

sight on a cold Sunday evening with its little groups of healthy adolescents "all dressed up and no place to go." They resent the boredom, and it is this that will prevent the majority of the young men and women, now in the Forces, from returning to the village after demobilisation.

The daily intimate contact with country life reveals the falsity of its idealisation by village writers, most of whom live in comfortable suburban residences. As "the ploughman homeward plods his weary way," he may seem a romantic figure to the poet. But the ploughman is probably wet as well as weary. When he gets to his cottage he will muck the floor with his muddy boots. His one small sitting-room, which is also the kitchen and the one room with a fire, will be crowded with his children. When he has had supper, doubtless in these days a sufficient meal, he will go to bed in another small room shared with his wife and the youngest child. It will almost certainly be draughty, and the roof may leak. These are the common circumstances of the ploughman's life.

He is far better paid than he was. The war scarcity of labour has ensured him security of employment, at least for a time. But he wants more, and he is beginning to understand how by following the example of his town brethren he may get more. W. H. Pedley says in *Labour on the Land*: "As rural workers and their wives have gained experience of better conditions through their contact with the towns, they have increased their demand for better conditions in the country." The "urbanisation," that the Gandhi-minded sociologists deplore, is the awakening of the countryman to the possibility of a better time for himself and his children.

Even with the present minimum wage of £3 10s. a week the farm labourer, who has been told that he is a vitally important public servant, is still among the worst paid of skilled workers. The *Ministry of Labour Gazette* for February, 1944, published the average earnings in sixteen industrial groups, and in only one is the average less than £4 10s. a week. That is the wage that the National Union of Agricultural Workers is demanding. The villager wants this wage with security of employment, a comfortable cottage not "tied" to the farmer, and opportunity for the pleasant use of his leisure. The tied cottage is a major rural grievance, and in 1937 it was estimated that out of 500,000 cottages 200,000 were tied. When labour was plentiful the worker might lose both his job and his home if he refused to vote for the Tory at an election, if his daughter "got into trouble," or if his wife declined to do domestic work at the farmhouse. Even in war conditions the hardships, though more trivial, are sometimes very real. I know of one man who quarrelled with his employer and had to leave his cottage. He had a choice of several other jobs, but he was obliged to take the least attractive because it was offered to him by the only farmer with a vacant cottage. Another man, well in the sixties, with some savings and a productive allotment, could earn from this allotment a sufficient income for himself and his wife, but he is obliged to continue in an employment, which he is finding increasingly trying, since, if he gave notice, he would lose the cottage in which he has lived for years.

I have before summarised what the country folk want in the phrase "sinks and cinemas." To describe what seem to me the essentials if the village is to be made a fit place for the modern villager to live in would need greater space than is now at my disposal.

But I have been surprised by one village opinion that is of general interest. It is often urged that the recovery of the material prosperity and the spiritual vitality of rural England can best be secured by again making the small family farm the common unit of occupation and cultivation, and even an informed realist, like the late Daniel Hall, while admitting all the difficulties of the small-holder, rather tepidly advocated the encouragement of small-holdings.

In my village there are only two men who add to their incomes by growing food for sale, and only one man who has ever expressed to me any ambition to work entirely "for himself." The villagers know all about the incidental hardships and risks set out by Professor Orwin in his *Speed the Plough*. Actually the number of small-holdings in England decreased in the years 1915 to 1938, the decrease being highest in the past eight years and among the cultivators of less than twenty acres.

Daniel Hall wrote of small-holders: "Hard workers themselves, their children are early inured to labour. The wife is an element of great importance on a small-holding; without her co-operation and labour the enterprise is hardly likely to succeed." In this passage Hall has summarised the moral case against the small-holding, which depends, as my neighbours know, on what is practically wife and child slave labour. The argument in their favour is similar to the case for the small urban shop, and the suggestion that either secures genuine independence is obviously false.

It seems certain that, to provide the maximum production of food, the mechanisation of the English countryside will increase, and the majority of farm workers have already become mechanically minded. Consequently, I find most of them unanimous in saying that, given the choice, they would prefer to work on a large mechanised farm than on the small farm with three or four hands. On the large farm, as Professor Orwin points out, there is the opportunity for responsible advancement and, too, for the provision of the comforts that have become common in decent factories.

It is not true that there is something in the character of the men who earn a living on the land that has caused them patiently to accept social conditions against which the town worker would revolt.

The Hammonds have made it clear that they have put up with harsh conditions because they have seen no chance of anything better, and no men willingly kick against the pricks. Now a spiritual change has occurred. They have been "urbanised" into the understanding of the possibilities of collective action.

SIDNEY DARK

RADIO NOTES

In March begins a series of daily broadcasts from France *in English*. This is the most enlivening piece of radio news we have had for a long time. Jacques Duchesne, who has picked his own team of speakers, editors, and translators from the European set-up of the B.B.C., can be succinctly described as (among other things) one of the very best radio men on either side of the Atlantic. An artist of keen intellect and a man of strong human feeling, Duchesne can be relied upon to convey to us what we in Britain most need to know: what life in France—and not only in France, but in Europe generally—is really like today. Few of us, I believe, are imaginatively aware of the absolute disparity that sunders our daily life from that of the ordinary European of 1945, whether far from or near to an actual war zone. It is the centres of emphasis that count, and it is these on which Duchesne and his collaborators can throw light for us—in talks, features, plays and concerts—so that we may judge the importance of the things which weigh on our minds by comparing them with the preoccupations of our opposite numbers "abroad." Anyone who listened to *Les Français parlent aux Français*, in the past four years, will realise how high the standard of these new broadcasts is likely to be. Is it too much to hope that, as Duchesne's team settles in and acquires an efficient technical and studio equipment, the novelty of material and outlook—the new point of departure—which this station is sure to display, will have a revitalising effect on our own methods over here—methods that have grown a bit stale and worn through overwork and the isolation of our society? The programmes are to run from 7.30–9.0 p.m. on all week-days, and from 7.0 on Sundays. Anyone in the south of England can hear them by tuning in to 463 medium wave, and in the north to 31.58 and 31.38 short wave. Meanwhile it is highly desirable that the B.B.C. should help to give the venture a start by carrying one or two of the first programmes on the Home Service; but at present I see no signs of this.

The "starring" of Schubert's Octet on February 12 was a most imaginative act on the part of the B.B.C. To place a single musical work on a pedestal and then spotlight it (Compton Mackenzie's introduction and commentary were neither more nor less than was needed in the circumstances), not only coaxes those ignorant of the work to listen to it, but also *recreates* it for those who may think they know it by heart. Proximity, though usually inevitable, is really noxious to works of art: different pieces of music, as well as paintings, rub off against each other and lose some of their identity in the process. The Director of the National Gallery doubtless realised this when he started the idea of placing a single masterpiece of painting on view at a time, in the otherwise empty gallery. This practice has been a distinct success, and it is to be hoped that the listening public will respond as enthusiastically to the B.B.C.'s equivalent. The performance on this occasion was not outstandingly good; but it was adequate, and I think there can be no doubt that the work was conspicuously well chosen. I will commit myself to the flat statement that anyone who does not fall for the Schubert Octet, on a first hearing, has not the root of the matter in him.

Poetry readings have been rather meagre lately, but Geoffrey Grigson's programme on William Barnes was a delightful thing. I thought Marius Goring's speaking of the poems quite excellent, but I wish that, for interest's sake, we could have had just one poem spoken in the broadest Dorset.

RECOMMENDATIONS:— Feb. 25th, 10.30 p.m. Thibaud and Tasso Janopoulo in César Franck's Violin Sonata.

Feb. 26th, 4.45 p.m. Poems by Robert Frost.
Feb. 28th, 7.55 p.m. Schubert's Mass in E flat.
March 2nd, 7.30 p.m. C. E. M. Joad and J. D. Bernal on "Should We Call a Halt to Science."

EDWARD SACKVILLE WEST

SEPTEMBER IN SHROPSHIRE

For J. E. G.

Now as I travel along the northern marshes
To a winter of slag and frozen mountains
I remember chiefly an undated evening
Standing at a window that looked across to Wales—
The shadows hanging like bats in the virginia creeper,
Tomatoes redder than the bricks they grow against,
The dunce-caps of convolvulus lying on the coke.
It seemed then that the pith and pride of England
Was ripening like a peach on the stable wall,
With none to gather it, none to treasure it,
For the labourers' hands were bound or cut from the wrists.
There was much else also ready to be remembered:
The September sun as hot as a kiss of parting,
The autumn songs of the chiffchaff and the chaffinch,
The herald moth like a withered leaf, the blue
Ear-rings of bilberries on the tiny lobes of the leaves.
So now the comic Victorian house,
Where Mrs. Radcliffe haunts the hearths like a down-draught,
I leave with you who already have so much,
Holding in your arms the wind that blows from Wales
And sings like a wren in the frosty trees,
Holding the sunlight and the wild birds' fruit,
Elderberry, cranberry, crabapple, hip and sloe,
Holding the healed and healthy limbs of children,
Laughing at the future in four acres of beans and chickens.
You know so much that is half-forgotten now,
The nudge of the catkin beneath the drying leaf,
The spring intentions of the swallow, the fantastic
Sting of love in the blood, the brutal wooing of God.
And so I leave you
To hoard the bright pods of a dying summer
In the brown and poignant winter of this war.

NORMAN NICHOLSON

PLAYS AND PICTURES

"Laura," at the St. Martin's Theatre

"You can't light my cigarette, you've just called me a murderer," says Miss Sonia Dresdel, whisking round the sofa to avoid the detective-hero's proffered match. For three-quarters of this play Laura is under suspicion for the murder, first of herself (the corpse being conveniently unrecognisable), then—when she has reappeared, *comme si de rien n'était*—of the girl-friend to whom she had lent her flat. Waldo Lydecker (Mr. Raymond Lovell), the effete Pygmalion to whom Laura owes her successful personality, throws skein after skein of embroidery silk into the machinery of justice, and Shelby Carpenter (Mr. Leslie Bradley), her beefy lover, insensitive to the point of caddishness, informs against her after she has discovered his goings-on with the murdered woman-of-no-importance. I have not read the novel on which this play is founded, nor did I see the film, which seems to have been excellent. This I can well believe, for the plot is ingenious and of the kind which lends itself to leisurely psychological exposition. On the stage, however, the psychology goes for nothing, the chief characters are hopelessly lacking in relief, and all that is left is a thriller too flabbily constructed to thrill. It is one of the first laws of the theatre that the exposition must carry the action forward; nothing of the kind happens here, with the result that the first act is very dull indeed. After that things liven up slightly, but such climaxes as occur invariably peter out in a round of drinks (the amount of cold tea the cast has to put back in the course of the evening is unbelievable), leaving such ideas as the play contains to be crowded into eight minutes of helter-skelter at the end of act three. Miss Dresdel mitigates her exuberant style to the requirements of the part, but hardly succeeds in giving more than a competent exhibition of stage technique: she cannot lend plausibility to an unreal character. Mr. Raymond Lovell does his best with a part in which only the late Frank Vosper could have succeeded in convincing us. Some of his incidental effects are admirable, but a man who was positively impotent with culture would hardly pronounce "Verdurin" so that we do not know what he has said until "Prowst" comes along to enlighten us. Neither he nor Miss Dresdel can be altogether blamed for muffing their preposterous final scene, but matters would be improved if Mr. Lovell started a bit lower; as it is, he leaves himself nothing to work up to. Mr. Leslie Bradley has exactly the right appearance, but contrives to make a wooden part even more wooden. Mr. Peter Hammond gives a touching exhibition of calf love; Mr. Robert Beatty, as the detective, is refreshingly natural and effortless; and Miss Maire O'Neill, as the confidential maid, is so extremely good that she puts her foot right through the play whenever she comes on to the stage.

THE MOVIES

"Practically Yours," at the Plaza
"Blonde Fever," at the Ritz

Everything Sacred might be the title of the film at the Plaza, as indeed of many another film from America. What chance has satire with an audience of 100,000,000? Yet occasionally a *Nothing Sacred*, a *Citizen Kane* slips through. Very occasionally. The trouble with Mitchell Leisen's *Practically Yours* is that it should be tough or nothing. Consider the theme. In Lieut. Dan Bellamy (Fred MacMurray) America commemorates a new hero who has made a suicide dive on a Jap aircraft carrier. Congress rises to hear his last words (recorded somehow) as he makes this self-sacrifice. From 8,000 feet down he talks reminiscently about duty, the sunlight on his office seat, Peggy, whose nose he would love to kiss in the park; then the bang as he and the Japs are blown skywards. But in the film taken of this exploit (yes, there was a film, too) a cutter notices what looks like an escaping aircraft. Lieut. Bellamy has dropped two bombs and been blown clear. He comes back to be met by Pan-America, by the reporters, by his boss, by the expectant Peggy (Claudette Colbert). The Peggy whose nose needed kissing was his dog, but he never gets the chance to say so. You would think the stage set for a gale of satire. Not at all. There's a war on; no monkey business. So *Practically Yours* is a harmless little comedy in which, after the melodramatic beginning, public morale has to be kept going by the pretence that Lieut. Bellamy and his Peggy are ideally united. Tapers, we are told, in American homes are lit to their love; and that isn't funny, either. Everything, or nearly everything, sacred. Well, the surprise is that despite this hotch-potch of melodramatic sentiment, *Practically Yours* achieves quite an amount of fun. Claudette Colbert spreads charm whenever she's on a screen, and misunderstandings are rather in her line. Fred MacMurray, doggy rather than wolfish (Oh lieutenant, in the floor ballot you were elected wolf, with only four votes against!" "Really, who were the four?") prefers sleeping bags to bedsteads but falls, of course, in love with Miss Colbert; he continues, as an actor, to improve. There are good moments of comedy between the two, especially at the beginning, when the Lieutenant is still looking at her as though she weren't his dog. Robert Benchley helps with some of his politic and self-effacing appearances. What makes me warm to the film, though, is the occasion when the universal lovers have to pose for the photographer. Mikhail Rasumny—new to me—is the artist in question. He will call his photograph "The Kiss," and it shall be used to advertise war bonds. They kiss. He is horrified. He explains to them all what a kiss should be; he achieves transports of mimicry, of æsthetic passion. When the picture has been taken he sinks back limply in a chair and is handed a glass of water. This little scene takes only ten minutes, but it is as perfect a bit of mimicry as I have encountered outside of Hitler and Charlie Chaplin. I could see *Practically Yours* again for its sake.

The merit of *Blonde Fever* is that it recognises the claims of adult marriage as against Romance (in the form of a batty little blonde), and that it bears traces of wit. These are not, perhaps, very striking merits. The film, taken apparently from a play by Ferenc Molnar, might indeed have been more insistently witty than it is. However, this matrimonial triangle (with Mary Astor) in a road-house escapes the usual Hollywood phrase-book and has the charm of being M.G.M's second choice. The Lion roars but faintly.

WILLIAM WHITEBAIT

Correspondence

THE SAN FRANCISCO CONFERENCE

SIR,—On April 25th, the United Nations are to meet at San Francisco to convert the Dumbarton Oaks Conference proposals into the Charter of the new world League of Nations. Public apathy is now in startling and deplorable contrast to the discussion that preceded and accompanied the framing of the old Covenant. It is to be hoped that the references in the Press to this matter since the Crimea Conference may prove to be the beginning of a discussion that will show where British public opinion stands on the all-important issue of organising Peace.

Perhaps it may be suggested that the San Francisco Conference ought not to attempt to give final form to the Charter of the United Nations. For the National Government in this country has no mandate and no qualification whatever for representing the British people on questions of reconstruction. Mr. Churchill, indeed, in his broadcast of March 21st, 1943, gave a pledge that there would be a general election before the British Government committed itself irrevocably on the organisation of peace and post-war reconstruction. The provisional governments in Europe, not to mention the emigré governments still in London, cannot even plausibly claim to represent the views of their peoples on such matters. For these reasons it is earnestly to be hoped that the San Francisco Conference will attempt to do no more than produce a Draft Charter, which would then be left for the consideration of governments and public opinion for some months before a conference met to give it final form and open it for signature and ratification.

You published an article by me on December 9th, 1944, entitled "Peace and Justice at Dumbarton Oaks," which proposed that the deadlock on voting in the Security Council should be solved by giving the Council the power to make recommendations on the settlement of disputes by a mere majority, while requiring the unanimity of the permanent members and a majority of the temporary members for any decision involving coercive action. It is not yet known what the compromise on this point is that was reached at the Crimean Conference. But the *New York Times* (quoted in the London *Times* of February 15th) declares "It may now be stated with certainty that Marshal Stalin agreed to a compromise on voting procedure which involves the following points: first, in all cases not involving punitive measures the decisions are to be taken by a simple majority of the eleven members of the Council; secondly, in all such cases the parties to a dispute would be unable to vote on their own case; thirdly, in cases involving punitive action such as economic or military sanctions against a nation charged with aggressive intentions or actions, the decisions are to be taken only when a majority of the Security Council, including the United States, Russia, Britain, France and China have voted affirmatively; and fourthly, in these cases Russia and the other permanent members of the Council would thus retain their powers of veto."

The article made the further point that the Security Council was not given the duty to endeavour to effect the settlement of disputes on the basis of obligations enjoining a decent code of international behaviour. It was concerned solely with the question of whether or not the existence or continuance of a dispute threatened peace. If so the Council was left a free hand to put an end to the danger to peace by any means it chose. This created a danger that the Charter might become the charter of appeasement as practised between 1931–39 at Geneva, in the non-Intervention Committee, and at Munich. The Great Powers then put pressure on the victims of aggression to surrender some or all of their fundamental rights, including the right to existence, to the aggressor, lest a victim's resistance should lead to the aggressor disturbing peace.

The Netherlands Government has now published a commentary on the Dumbarton Oaks Conference proposals, which points out that "there is no mention or indication anywhere in the proposals of the basis on which decisions are to be taken" by the Security Council in dealing with threats to peace arising out of disputes, except when the parties agree to arbitration or to refer their dispute to the Court. "With regard to all other cases (and they may well prove in practice to be the most crucial) there is no indication of any standard to be applied. It is only suggested that peace must not be endangered.

"This proposal appears very unsatisfactory to the Netherlands Government, who attach the highest value to the recognition of some acceptable standard of conduct in international affairs. What guarantee does this proposal afford victims of international violence that their cause will be upheld? Is it not tantamount to putting a premium on pressure brought to bear by stronger on weaker States? Instead of an obligation for the Security Council to enforce the duty of Member States, whether right or wrong, in no case to resort to violence, there would come into being an obligation for the Council to save the peace. Experience shows how easily this may come to be done by seeking solutions calculated to induce Powers threatening to use violence to refrain from carrying out their threat; such solutions may well be at the expense of the threatened Power, however innocent."

There is no space to discuss the proposals made in the December 9th article or in the Dutch Government's note on how to correct this very grave defect in the Dumbarton Oaks Conference proposals, except to say that the suggested voting compromise on the Council is only a small first step to put matters right. But it does show, I think, that the defect really exists, and is a matter urgently requiring discussion and thought.

K. ZILLIACUS

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SERVICE VOTERS

SIR,—Your correspondent "Aircraftsman" makes some pungent, but not wholly tenable criticism of the provisions of the new R.P. Act relating to proxy and postal voting for members of the Forces. He is unfair in mentioning the names of Mr. G. R. Shepherd and Mr. A. Woodburn, M.P., as if they were parties to some electoral iniquity.

The Committees on which Mr. Shepherd and Mr. Woodburn served were in a major sense concerned with technical and practical procedures within certain terms of reference, and both men worked consistently to secure as much appropriate amendment and improvement as was possible or could be achieved within the framework of the basal requirements.

The Government decided on proxy and postal voting for the Services. Intricacy of machinery was inevitable in the abnormal circumstances in which the scheme will be operated, and this despite all, and genuine, desires of political officers, returning officers, civil servants, and naval and military officers to simplify it. Some of the points that Aircraftsman touched on had consideration in the committees. It was not possible, for instance, to make proxy registration automatic.

It may modify Aircraftsman's concern about Labour if I indicate two points relating to the original attitude at Labour Headquarters.

(*a*) There was strong opinion and repugnance against extensions of proxy and postal voting, as being corrosive of the secrecy of the ballot, a precious heritage for democracy.

(*b*) Proposals were devised to allow for direct polling by the Services and discussed. (Based on personal experiences of a Canadian Election.) Labour would have liked to have seen direct polling by members of the Services, but it has reluctantly to be said that the difficulties were of a magnitude to depress optimism about any easy efficacy. It would have meant superimposing a polling and counting administration on the top of a similar basal organisation to that already required for postal voting.

Transport House. HAROLD CROFT

AUSTRIAN UNITY

SIR,—The impression seems to be prevalent that Austrians in exile in this country and elsewhere are so divided amongst themselves that it is impossible to do anything for them until they put away their differences and come together on a national policy. The general goodwill towards Austrians which is to be found in many people in this country cannot be brought to a practical focus on any one group of organised Austrians if they are indeed split into factions. We who are members of the British association, "Friends of Austria," know that this impression of radical disunity is at variance with the facts.

There are very many opinions amongst Austrians as amongst all other active-minded people, and some of these opinions will undoubtedly lead to differences of policy later on. Meanwhile, the overwhelming majority of Austrians outside Austria have united themselves in the Free Austrian World Movement, with headquarters in London, on the policy of Austrian independence and close collaboration with her neighbours in the peace system of the United Nations. This is also the policy of the Austrian Freedom Front, the organised resistance movement inside Austria. The Free Austrian World Movement has secured the affiliation, or the declared official support, of nearly all organised Austrians abroad, representing wide variations of political opinion and religious belief. The only important exception is one of the socialist groups in this country, and its counterpart in the United States, with whom are associated one or two other numerically small groups and certain politicians. This is a section of Austrians who, on other grounds, have chosen not to support the Free Austrian World Movement, but who do not oppose the general policy which is the basis of union. It is fair to say that this socialist group is not by any means representative of present-day socialist opinion among Austrians in exile, for the socialist groups which have affiliated to the World Movement are numerically much stronger; it does not enjoy the support of young Austrians, and derives its importance from earlier international socialist connections.

It cannot, therefore, be truly said that Austrians outside Austria are not organised, not united, and have no genuinely representative committee. And it is important that the organised unity of Austrians abroad, standing with the Austrian Freedom Front on the policy of independence, shall have the instructed and sympathetic support of the British people. For although the independence of Austria is the declared policy of the Allied Powers, the success of that policy depends entirely upon the enthusiasm and active support of the Austrian people. The national task of Austrians at the present moment, inside Austria and abroad, will be made easier or harder according to whether or not the British public recognise and respond to their organised unity on the policy of independence within the orbit of the United Nations.

H. J. BLACKHAM
M. CORBETT ASHBY
4a, Inverness Place, W. D. ROSS
Queensway, W.2. ERNEST BARKER

EUROPEAN RELIEF

SIR,—It has been to our lasting shame that, in 1918, public opinion acquiesced while the food blockade on Germany remained for months after the armistice. In some parts of the Continent to-day we are told that conditions are far worse than in 1918, and what relief has been done has been piecemeal and wholly inadequate. We in this country accepted extra Christmas rations (of those very foodstuffs that our friends stand most in need of) while about the same time in Sweden a Gallup poll showed that 81 per cent. of the people were willing to have their rations reduced to leave more supplies for their neighbours.

In 1943 Dr. Howard Kirschner said of his struggle to have his plan for modified relief to mothers and babies accepted by the authorities in this country (which, incidentally, was voted for by both Houses in U.S.A.) that he had won all the arguments but lost his case. We shall never know how many of the vulnerable young have perished since then as a result of the implacable ultimatum—"Let's win the war first!" The barrenness of mental outlook in high places behind this ultimatum is still manifest to-day in our lack of a generous co-ordinated policy of food relief, and may well be one of the major reasons why U.N.R.R.A. has not fulfilled those high hopes and promises made at Atlantic City in 1943.

It is now time for a more vigorous and enlightened public opinion to make itself felt, and not only deprecate any suggested increase of rations, but insist on sharing our better portion with those whose need is so much greater than our own.

Jordans, Bucks MARGARET HAYWARD

THE CASE OF MAUD JONES

SIR,—In the "London Diary" of February 3rd, 1945, you have a paragraph dealing with the tragedy of Elizabeth Maud Jones. May I be allowed to comment on two statements of fact?

1. That this woman won a high school scholarship.
2. That she could not take it up because her father was on the dole and could not buy the necessary books.

May I deal with the latter first?

Actually no such things as scholarships, as ordinarily understood, are given by the Local Education Authority. We offer vacant places which are filled by competitive examination, and the question of whether there be a fee of any kind is afterwards determined by the financial circumstances of the successful pupil's parents. In every case of the child of a father who is on the dole, the position would be as follows:—All tuition absolutely free; every single book absolutely

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ROUTLEDGE

free; on every school day a first class hot lunch free; and, in addition, a monetary maintenance grant. You will see from this, therefore, that statement No. 2 has no foundation in fact.

Now may I deal with the first statement?

It is true that this unfortunate person did sit the competitive examination in 1938. She was then 12 years of age. Ninety places were declared vacant and filled by the first 90 pupils on the examination result list. This person occupied, with two others, the 195th place on the list, so that even if a second 90 pupils could have been accommodated she would still be unsuccessful. The examination consists of arithmetic and English (with composition). The maximum marks in each are 150. The marks obtained by the pupil in question were: English 62, Arithmetic 28, total 90. You will see from these facts that the first statement is also devoid of foundation and that actually she was very far indeed from winning "a high school scholarship."

It is felt very strongly by the governors of the school, who make such adequate provision for poor children who show capacity to benefit from a secondary education, that these facts should have equal prominence with the unfortunate mis-statements which have been made. It is to be hoped that Mr. Bevin, who time and again asks the nation to accept his judgment on matters of great moment, exercises far greater care in ascertaining the facts upon which he bases his judgments than he appears to have done in this case.

CHAIRMAN OF THE GOVERNORS

The County School,
Neath.

SHELLEY AND HARRIET WESTBROOK

SIR,—Probably every reader of the NEW STATESMAN AND NATION knows that Shelley in his enthusiastic youth fell in love with a girl called Harriet Westbrook, by whom he had two children, including one daughter whom they named Ianthe. They probably know further that Shelley soon fell out of love with Harriet and in love with Mary Godwin, the daughter of William Godwin and Mary Woolstonecraft. Harriet Shelley, as she then was, in desperation drowned herself in the Serpentine. So far, most of those who read this letter will be familiar with the facts. What follows will, I think, be news to every reader.

In *The Countryman* for December, 1944, I had an article on my early boyhood in the Quantock village of Bishop's Lydeard. I received a letter (among other interesting ones) from Mr. R. A. Masters of Virginia Water, whom I did not previously know (his family having left the village when I was ten years old). He is the son of the then lay reader in Bishop's Lydeard. His name was well known to me, both when he lived there and for years after he left. Here is an extract from one of Mr. Masters' letters. I should first mention that my present age is 73, and Mr. Masters' age is 76. In his letter, dated the 19th of last month, he wrote: "You were only ten years old when we left Lydeard, and our paths would not be likely to cross. Your mother's family were rooted in the neighbourhood, and we were mere birds of passage, and with one leg, as it were, in Cothelstone (a village three miles away). You ask about my father. His position in the place was rather an anomalous one. Mr. E. J. Esdaile knew my father in Cheltenham through the early '60s. When, in 1864, he joined his old father at Cothelstone House, shortly before the death of the old squire, he brought my father with him. Mr. E. was a Christian philanthropist, and he employed my father to supplement the spiritual administration of the local clergy to the sick and poor, and to report needy cases to Mr. and Mrs. Esdaile, who would send relief. My father was not in holy orders, but the parsons, on the whole, took his work in good part. He visited over a wide area, including Kingston, Bagborough, Combe and Ash, and endeared himself to many of the poor folk. He also took 'cottage meetings' in outlying hamlets, and held bible classes for youths in several parishes. . . . You may not know that the Mrs. Esdaile I have mentioned was the daughter of the poet Shelley and the poor distracted Harriet who threw herself into the Serpentine. The daughter was brought up remote from the contact and influence of her atheistic, socialist father (whose poetry, nevertheless, is so ethereal) and grew to be a saintly lady, full of good works. I remember weeping at her funeral, for I knew my poor mother had lost in her one of her best friends."

I looked up all the biographies of Shelley that I possess to find what accounts they gave of Harriet's children after she had drowned herself. They all agreed as to the refusal of Mr. Westbrook to deliver up the custody of his grandchildren. A chancery suit was instituted, at the end of which, in March 1817, Lord Eldon deprived Shelley of his son and daughter on account of his opinions and conduct generally. But here the accounts differ. William Sharp says that the children were, by the Lord Chancellor, placed under the care of a clergyman. John Addington Symonds and André Maurois say that they were looked after by an army doctor called Hume, at Hanwell. That, however, is of no importance. I may mention that the Esdailes of Cothelstone were, when I lived in the district, wealthy landowners with carriages-and-pairs, parks, lodges and lakes, equipped liveried grooms and footmen.

HARRY ROBERTS

Oakshott Hanger,
Hawkley, Hampshire.

NARROW BOAT

SIR,—I notice the remarks of Meriol Trevor with interest. I have lived on the canal side for six years and am appalled at the neglect and lack of interest shown in the children. I feel the parents are beyond hope, "they've buttered their bread and must sleep on it", but the poor, pale, undersized children should surely be taken in hand so that they can at least choose their vocation as they get older.

What I feel they need are houses at the water side turned into boarding schools so that the parents can call weekly and see their children and have them on the boats at holiday times.

Sometimes boats are tied up here for two or three weeks, because one member is ill (there is a first aid post), but the children have such an inferiority complex that they will not face the village schools.

As for being a jolly, sturdy people, I don't think there are any A.1 specimens on the entire canal except a few bright young fishermen who come from the East Coast when their proper trade is slack.

I should be pleased to entertain anyone genuinely interested to a short stay, that they might see for themselves what goes on.

PHYLLIS PEBODY

Stoke Bruerne,
Towcester, Northants.

MYSTERIES

SIR,—Y. Y. asks whether pigs cut their throats when swimming. Fat pigs with double and treble chins and overgrown claws may do so, for all I know, but stores that have led an active life do not.

Some of such were being taken in a small boat to the *Lerina*, lying in Lundy Roads, when one jumped overboard. It was not until the majority had been put aboard that the small boat went after the swimmer which, by that time, had apparently determined to swim the Atlantic and had made a good start. He appeared no worse for the adventure, which was surprising, for he must have swallowed some sea water and salt is anathema to pigs.

By the way, Y. Y. may be interested to learn of a quick way of killing a pig which I discovered by accident when a boy. A biggish pig did not come to the trough, and thinking that a dose of Epsom salts might be beneficial, I put a dessertspoonful into his mouth. He shuddered violently, and was dead before one could say "knife."

MARTIN COLES HARMAN

Lundy Island.

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Chatto and Windus

BOOKS IN GENERAL

PRE-FABRICATED ships, pre-fabricated houses—why not pre-fabricated literature? The question will be more alarming to readers than it is to writers. Plot-lifting, plagiarism and borrowing are common professional practice. Chaucer takes what he likes from Boccaccio, Shakespeare from Holinshed; the irreproachable George Eliot picks up the central episode of *The Heart of Midlothian* and lowers it into the middle of *Adam Bede*. The creative faculty feeds on excitement and when there is a dearth of personal adventure in a writer's life, professional larceny is equally stimulating. There have been novelists like the Abbé Prévost who made larceny their occupation, for his novels flow, as by a conveyor-belt, straight from English fiction into the French. It may be objected that this is not true pre-fabrication, but a kind of second-hand dealing. Why not an entirely new pre-fabricated novel, free from borrowing and free from ghosting? We know of famous writers like Dumas who "put their work out"; is it not possible for a novelist to "take work in," to be a kind of assembly plant where the parts are delivered and where all he has to do is to put them together?

It is possible. It has been possible since 1928. An American, Mr. William Wallace Cook, published in that year a book called *Plotto* which set him up as the Kaiser or Ford of novel production. Mr. Cook was convinced that if you had the desire to write, you had the capacity to do so. Genius was the infinite capacity for taking pains; by taking pains—or rather by allowing Mr. Cook to take the pains for you—you might go a long way towards genius. "I could write a novel easily only I can never think of a plot"—Mr. Cook heard this familiar complaint and saw that it touched the heart of the problem. With wonderful industry, he examined all the plots of fiction, classified them, indexed them, and created an intricate system of cross-reference by which one can build up the plots of any number of novels in the course of an evening. This plurality is, of course, unhappy. Embarrassment of choice is the weakness of *Plotto*—as he called his system—for we mean that we can think of only too many plots, when we say we can think of none. But Mr. Cook's principles were sound and they were not to be followed in any ignoble, mechanic or predatory spirit.

> The Soul, with its human faculties which put it in immediate touch with the Universe, is a Divine Instrument, an Aeolian Harp which is not played upon by the Winds of Chance, but by all the Winds of Destiny, that blow from the four quarters of Human Nature; and this music of the Soul is a Divine Harmony which the Creative Imagination, alone of the human faculties, interprets in Creative Art.

That could hardly be more handsome. Mr. Cook's achievement was to grasp the Aeolian Harp and convert it into a pianola.

What is it that human beings chiefly desire? Happiness, of course. But what kinds of happiness? Many more than can be covered in one volume; a single factory cannot turn out everything. Mr. Cook decided that he must deal with only three kinds of happiness: happiness in love, happiness in marriage, happiness through the success of an enterprise. A large body of fiction would be comprehended in this choice. All commercial fiction would be included in it. Then he decided that the course of a good story may be defined in four words: Purpose, Obstacle leading to Conflict, and the Outcome. Hamlet has the purpose of avenging his father's death; the obstacle is his irresolution, conflicts with others ensue and all ends in dramatic misery. Mr. Cook's next step was to pick out a number of what he called masterplots. In each masterplot a protagonist is defined in general terms. In column A for example, we find No. 4, "an erring person"; in column B it is suggested "he falls into misfortune through mistaken judgment"; in column C "he undertakes a role that leads to catastrophe." What kind of misfortune? Look up the key figure 21, and again there is a general definition. Let us take the one called Transgression. The key number is 1295 and here the choice opens out. He can strike gold and not tell his partner; he can be an outlaw; he can try to trick someone out of an estate; he can commit a crime, but a certain object, X, will continually remind him of it; he can discover his employer is a fugitive from justice; he can be "a minister of the gospel who errs secretly on the human side." Further key numbers follow. The Minister A (see 68) may have "wronged B the woman he loved, but secretly, and A craftily retains his own high place in society, leaving B to bear the heartache and shame alone." Continuing our investigations, we can arrive indifferently at the plot and characters of "She was poor but she was honest" or the plot of *The Scarlet Letter*.

That is, as Mr. Cook saw, the snag. *Plotto* can provide you with everything except the things that make a writer. It can do everything but make you write. On the other hand, a novelist will and ought to stoop to anything. Henry James advised us always to be ready for "the germ" and *Plotto* is a veritable hospital of germs. It is a warehouse of bacilli. No. 9 is "a person suffering from adverse conditions and seeking to remedy them." He turns from "a hoodlum into a gentleman overnight." Or he buys a dress suit. Is his adversity due to weakness of character? Alas, he makes that ancient inevitable mistake: he "forms a platonic friendship." Or is environment the trouble? "He lives in a strange community which is ruled by an idol of Fear; or he seeks a community ruled by Fear, but finds it difficult to develop sufficient courage to accomplish his purpose." (Here is a parallel to the plot of Stevenson's *The Suicide Club*). At the end of three pages of suggestion I find this irresistible one. "A, impersonating a boy, is subject to the rough pranks of male companions who do not suspect her true sex." Let us follow her, noting the reference numbers:

> "B in male attire is suddenly revealed to A, the man she loves, in her true sex (220), (244), (264), (359). She had disguised herself in order to be near him." Alas, consult No. 220: A's friends warn him against B. He resists her because all this dressing up indicates that she is "morally inferior." From this point many encouraging paths diverge. One is surprising: A, in order to guard himself against marriage, gives out that he has an invalid wife. To make his pretence convincing he buys the wax model of a sick woman and sits her in a chair by his window for everyone to see!

Tit for tat; but it hardly makes a novel and this is our fault. Mr. Cook is an administrator and organiser, and people of that kind collapse if one does not take them seriously and *au pied de la lettre*. It is fatal to cheat, to drift from plot to plot or to add plot to plot in the manner of Dostoevsky. One must look up Mr. Cook's character symbols, one must build up incident. Chemical formulae like (1451b ch A to A7 and A8 to A), (1457 tr A and A9) must be resolved. Poor B, for example, is a stenographer who has never had a lover. She "feels this misfortune keenly." In this situation the best thing to do is to begin where you are, and so B falls in love with her employer; but it is hopeless. She gives it all up because she has to make a home for her cruel father, a widower who belongs to an unpleasant religious sect. To make things worse, her employer falls for a vampire who ruins him financially; and to crown her misery, her father calmly marries and throws her out of the house. What does poor B do now? There are several possibilities. She can resign herself to her fate. She can get another man—but how? By joining a better religious movement than her father's, by getting rescued in an accident. We reject these for a more exciting suggestion. One day she gets into the wrong room at an hotel and finds a man in it. He accuses her of being a thief; but later he reveals himself to be her ex-employer who has by now taken to crime. They are discovered by the police, and the ex-employer gives himself up in order to exonerate her. It is a simple business to patch up this trouble and make A and B happy ever after.

Plotto is a ridiculous book. It is a funeral monument to commercial fiction; an elegy on the elaborate plots of the Victorian novel which owed their origin to serialisation and to the early association of the English novel with the drama in its most conventional and artificial phase. We were parting from European habit as early as Fielding; we rejected the course suggested by novelists like Richardson and still faintly visible in Thackeray. Where the French novel depends upon the surprise of moral or intellectual discovery, where the Russian novel depends upon the off-beat of real life, even in novels as elaborately plotted as Dostoevsky's are, the English novelist has depended upon stage machinery, the fantastic, the bizarre: the missing will, the unhonoured heir, the family secret. How far we moved from the European tradition may be judged by the isolation and unpopularity of Meredith, who stands out, freakish as French, in nineteenth century fiction. The English novel, one may safely say, is preoccupied with the material fortunes of people first of all; and we no doubt owe this preoccupation to the phenomenal acquisitiveness of the English during the last 300 years. As that declines, the English novel turns nowadays to Continental models. Are they less artificial than our own? Yes—and yet the English reader will always suspect that the internal psychology of Flaubert or Proust is not less arbitrary than, shall we say, the external plot of *Bleak House*. The intellect has its tyrannous will, the sensibility its coincidences. *Madame Bovary* is the most arbitrary of all great novels; for it is based on the theory of total Bovarism. Life is obliged at all points to conform. *The Egoist* has some resemblance of type with *Madame Bovary*, and are we to say that the method of these novels is less arbitrary, less artificial, than the method of the English novelists who held that a novel must be continually surprising, that an acknowledged child, a hidden crime, a forged will, must exist in every family chronicle!

Plotto is a game like "the character game" or "Monopoly." It has reduced the plot-novel to farce. *Plotto* did not really save the writer the trouble of thinking; it saved the chronic novel-reader the bother of reading. He need not get his dope from the library; he can make up his own. A more serious criticism of *Plotto* is that its scope is small and its field too well-worn. What we want is a guide to the plotless novel and especially to the conventional plotless novel of mood and feeling. Here is an opportunity. Will Mr. Cook oblige us with a new book called, shall we say, *Feelo?* Many ideas suggest themselves. The classic young woman of the Russian novel, who stands at the window and indeed does nothing else, would be in it: "It is spring. I stand at my window. The sun is shining. Why is it (a) I am happy, (b) unhappy, (c) uncertain whether I am happy or unhappy?" "Is the mystery of life (a) soluble, (b) insoluble, (c) a mixture of both?" Or the analysis of love: "Why do I (a) feel pain when he kisses me, (b) not feel pain, (c) wish for more or less pain." And so on. *Feelo* would be an advance on *Plotto*, and *Feelo* would have the enormous resources of the Freudian case histories, with their ultra-Victorian plots, to draw upon. And that I suppose is the answer to Mr. Cook. He is about fifty years behind the times. We do not reject him because he likes fantastic and elaborate plots; he has simply gone to the wrong period for them. Psychology has disclosed patterns which are as involved as the story of *The Woman in White*, as slick as anything by Edgar Wallace, as melodramatic as *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. I hope *Plotto* will be published in England after the war, for it is hard to come by now; but even more I hope that *Feelo* will follow.

V. S. PRITCHETT

APOLLINAIRE

Guillaume Apollinaire: Choix de Poésies.
Introd. by C. M. BOWRA. *Horizon.* 7s. 6d.

Apollinaire is indisputably the inspiring force behind French poetry to-day, the leader in whose tracks the young, consciously or unconsciously, follow. But is "leader" the name that suits him best? I believe he is thought of rather as a companion, an adviser, a friend. A master who smiles on truancy, an accomplice in little mystifications as well as in great adventures, he endears himself to the heart of the young also by his liking for tenderness and by an indefinable chivalry that floats in his verses and ennobles his countenance.

In the renaissance of poetry that the years of occupation brought to France the voice of Apollinaire offered as it were a starting point: it is a voice that propounds enigmas yet always remains simple. For what in fact was the origin of this renaissance? Was it not perhaps a constraint, that is to say the obligation upon the poet to express himself in veiled words, to speak allusively as one does to close friends? And also, of course, the secret fervour that informs the spirit of the oppressed, and the nostalgia that haunts the exiled. All such states of mind found satisfaction in Apollinaire's singing, whether it led us about the streets of Paris or evoked a remote French pasture mauve with meadow-saffron. His images were passwords that recalled the bizarre and ingenious code-messages which the London wireless sped nightly over our heads. Young men escaping from the enemy and disguised under false names spontaneously rediscovered his images or invented others like them, merely by looking upwards to the sky and its constellations. In the clandestine life Apollinaire became a friend.

Is it generally known that Stavelot—a village that has figured lately in the Ardennes communiqués—witnessed one of Apollinaire's earliest escapades? One summer—he was fifteen or sixteen at the time—his mother, an addict of roulette at Ostend and Spa, had deposited him with a kind hotel-keeper at Stavelot. Then, luck turning against her, she wrote *Débrouille-toi*—("Shift for yourself"); and the young Guillaume stole away at night carrying his bag but unburdened by the hotel bill, and walked some seven miles to catch a train. The curious thing is that the people of Stavelot have commemorated this not particularly edifying incident with a plaque in the poet's honour.

The selection from Apollinaire's verse that Mr. Bowra has made for the English public has the great merit of presenting a very complete view of the poet, embracing in turn each of his aspects, plaintive and haughty, ingenuous and satirical, elegiac and realistic. These fifty poems reveal very clearly the link between symbolism and surrealism. What, for instance, could be more like Verlaine than this stanza:

> Je passais au bord de la Seine
> Un livre ancien sous le bras
> Le fleuve est pareil à ma peine
> Il s'écoule et ne tarit pas
> Quand donc finira la semaine

and similarly these verses written in prison:

> Que lentement passent les heures
> Comme passe un enterrement
> Tu pleureras l'heure où tu pleures
> Qui passera trop vitement
> Comme passent toutes les heures

And side by side with this lament you find *Océan de terre*, which foreshadows the great chimaeras of surrealism. This poem is dedicated to Chirico, which leads me to an observation that I think capital upon the contrast between the inspiration of the symbolists and that of the surrealists. The symbolist is a poet who hears, the surrealist is one who sees. The former seeks for the echo, submits himself to the influence of the musical *motif*; the latter works upon memories that are almost always visual. So true is this that the symbolist school had a close kinship with the musicians of the time (think of Dujardin and the *Revue Wagnérienne*, Mallarmé and the concerts that were his "vespers"). Surrealism, on the other hand, is all with the painters. To understand it you must be accustomed to Braque's "snapshots," to the super-imposed planes of Picasso, to Dali's prophetic crimsons. Thus the two movements flow from very different sources; and Apollinaire draws from both: to change the metaphor, he straddles the two periods. In Mr. Bowra's anthology the choice of poems and the way of presenting them reveal a method and a psychological intention admirably calculated to display the lineaments of the poet. One can see that Mr. Bowra is experienced in the thoughtful selection of texts.

The first poem, *Zone*, might be taken as the poet's autobiography; the last, *La jolie rousse*, as his poetic testament. *Zone* is Apollinaire's whole life rising in his memory, like a springtide at the equinox. Childhood days, travels, desires, ambitions, ordeals—his past submerges him. And how imbued with pity, with human kindliness, is this poem that seems to run on without ever an arrest. Indeed, the permanent impression made when we consider Apollinaire's poetry as a whole—as I have been doing, thanks to Mr. Bowra—is of the importance the poet attaches to goodness of heart. (The same trait distinguished Max Jacob.) Apollinaire is detached, undecided, fantastic and even, if you like, perverse, but he is unarmed against kindness. In some ways he is a character such as Dostoevsky liked to invent. With his fatalism and intensity, Apollinaire's life would, if it were written with even a little skill, recall the atmosphere of Russian novels.

La jolie rousse is a plea for all the dissidents of Art, especially for those who are adventurers in language, who extort from the world its secrets, who forge keys for locked doors, and—to paraphrase Apollinaire's own words—who fight always on the frontiers of the limitless and of the future. In this poem we find one of the few aesthetic manifestos that Apollinaire has left us:

> Nous voulons nous donner de vastes et d'étranges domaines
> Où le mystère en fleurs s'offre à qui veut le cueillir
> Il y a là des feux nouveaux des couleurs jamais vues
> Mille phantasmes impondérables
> Auxquels il faut donner de la réalité

How fine a creed for the young! Who has not had such dreams! Only, to this explorer's spirit, it is essential to add sincerity, in the first place, and then the gift of being human, the power to communicate. Without these, the colours must fade unnoticed and will not last the season through. Also, one must not overwork what one has invented, but let future generations uncover in one's work its concealed instructions. In art, especially in poetry, the great inventors have always been those who were unable or unwilling to exploit fully their discoveries. They died poor, like all true inventors, but posterity takes it upon itself to furnish them with noble obsequies.

JACQUES DE LACRETELLE,
de l'Académie française.

HERBERT AND GEORGE

The Happy Turning: A Dream of Life.
By H. G. WELLS. *Heinemann.* 6s.

There have always been two (and probably many more) of H. G. Wells. Let's call the two I have in mind Herbert and George. Herbert reacts; George dreams. You see how it is. Herbert is often cross, but because he is attached to a man of genius he works off his irritation in splendid stories of the frustration and deceptions and cruelties and stupidities practised by the Powers-that-Be on innumerable other Herberts, on Mr. Polly, on Mr. Hoopdriver, on Mr. Lewisham and Bealby and . . . but the list can be completed by any student of the twentieth century novel. Sometimes Herbert is very spiteful and those who have annoyed him or failed to appreciate him or patronised him find themselves caricatured in all sorts of wounding and undignified ways. This Herbert has never been easy to keep in order. Say to him, even in his later phases, "I do not think your last novel is as good as *Kipps*," and he will retort with a postcard that stings like a wasp or a novel that takes your least attractive characteristics to the Wellsian laboratory and dissects them in the most shameless fashion. The secret is to reply: "But my dear H. G., is this sort of thing worthy of you? Are you not the creator of masterpieces? Are you not among the Immortals? Are you not also a Dreamer?"

The effect is magical. Herbert may spit once again, describing you as a low fellow and a cad taking part in a conspiracy to undermine his reputation. But in a moment he passes and by a miracle George takes his place. George has less humour than Herbert, but he is a much more amiable fellow. "Yes," he says, "you are right. Why should we squander our meagre span of life in bickering? Come with me to the hill-tops and see, far away in the distance, man, lizard-like, oozing from the primeval slime. Look ahead, into the future. See, am I not right? Progress is real. That is Man with head erect and Woman by his side, with her hair floating free in the wind. They march, do they not, to the Dawn? They are no longer concerned with the squabbles of our unplanned chaos; they are not afraid of gods or priests or men. They live as comrades in beautiful buildings. Love, not religion, unites them." "Yes, yes," you say eagerly, for George's sight is better than yours. "Yes, I am sure you are right. But what are they doing with themselves in the freedom of their ordered cities?" Perhaps it is an unfair and cowardly question, this age-long doubt lest men and women may be nothing, if they are released from the conflicts that make up their history. Anyway, H.G. has come as near as any prophet to telling us how to spend —not eternity, but Utopian time. If it still sounds dull, even in that fine passage in *The Shape of Things to Come* where we learn that we shall find abiding satisfaction in the creation of new species of flowers and trees, that is not George's fault. For though prophets can take us up mountains, the view from the top is limited by our own defects of vision.

I am not sure to which of the two, Herbert or George, I am the more grateful. Both are here again in one slim volume of fifty pages. George and Herbert are now, H.G. tells us, seventy-seven years old and they go together (the division is mine, not H.G.'s) every day for a walk, to the Savile club, to Queen Mary's rose-garden, to Smith's bookshop. George, the dreamer, finds an unexpected and non-irritant pathway somewhere off Regent's Park, and in these dreams there are blasphemous and riotously honest conversations with Jesus Christ, who has a very proper detestation of St. Paul, but regrets that, like H. G. Wells, He failed to persuade the world to learn the common sense of love and the folly of war and nationalism and the rest of the bag of evil tricks. George clearly is the spokesman in this good-tempered and reflective dialogue. At home in the garden, which H.G. with his trowel wants to make as neat and beautiful as the world of his dreams, he is frustrated by an over-large and spreading sycamore tree and by the end of the chapter Herbert has made the luckless tree a symbol of all the tawdry, proliferating race of money-making, shoddy self-seekers who threaten to withhold from common people the heritage that could be theirs. In honour of that sycamore H.G. conjures from the Book of Deuteronomy the finest curse ever penned by an inspired writer. Back in Dream George discusses, with a naughtiness that proves that Herbert is still at his elbow, all the shortcomings of English literature since Shakespeare. But he ends with a simple declaration, which, as I understood it, George and Herbert agree in regarding as the surviving faith of H. G. Wells. It comes to this: Bite and fight and work with all the guts and gumption that God gave you, even so the world will not understand or pay more than a passing and uncomprehending

attention. Prophesy and preach with the tongues of men and of angels and few will be convinced or remember. One thing only abides and survives the passage of time. And that is beauty of form and harmony of spirit.

KINGSLEY MARTIN

DETECTION

Puzzle for Puppets. By PATRICK QUENTIN. *Gollancz.* 7s. 6d.
Till Death Do Us Part. By JOHN DICKSON CARR. *Hamish Hamilton.* 8s. 6d.
Secrets Can't Be Kept. By E. R. PUNSHON. *Gollancz.* 7s. 6d.
My Father Sleeps. By GLADYS MITCHELL. *Michael Joseph.* 8s. 6d.
Spyracket. By WALTER TAYLOR. *Eyre and Spottiswoode.* 8s. 6d.
The President Died at Noon. By GEORGE BORODIN. *King and Staples.* 8s. 6d.

The dwindling stream of detection still harbours some stout old fish whose methods we know well. Patrick Quentin is the senior pseudonym of Messrs. Webb and Wheeler, a highly efficient American partnership which has been working on detection for the last fifteen years. These technicians can be trusted never to let the reader down but they don't aim high: they are content to slip along the well-oiled groove of nervous excitement. In *Puzzle for Puppets* Lieutenant Peter Duluth tries to spend a week-end's leave in San Francisco with his gorgeous wife. His uniform is stolen while he's in a Turkish bath. From that point events follow a nightmare sequence. The uniform commits murder after murder, while Peter arrives always too late to see who's inside it but just in time to be incriminated. Mechanically the plot is perfect, with a jolt of surprise at the end for the unwary. But the sardonic reader will scrutinise the behaviour of a bearded gentleman who knows all about what's going on and could enlighten us in a sober half-minute, but who is always too drunk to do more than utter cryptic remarks such as: "I warned you on page 84," "The red rose and the white rose mean blood," or "The elephant hasn't forgotten." Such professional tricks are effective but cannot enhance Patrick Quentin's reputation.

Those who kept Mr. Dickson Carr's "Appointments with fear" at the B.B.C. will have a sense of *déjà vu* when they pick up *Till Death Do Us Part*. They will recall the young man at a garden party in a thunderstorm who is told by a fortune-teller that his *fiancée* is a murderess. But that is just the chance for Mr. Carr's prestidigitation. If his plots start the same, you may be sure this one will turn out different: and so it does. The first was a scheme for robbery; this is murder, with Dr. Fell wheezing out the explanation of one of the most Heath Robinson contraptions that even Mr. Carr ever perpetrated. And here I wish to give my final opinion of Mr. Carr's contraptions. (He has written over 30 detective works based on a contraption, so it's no use expecting him to mend his ways.) Theoretically they are perfect but in practice they ring hollow, because they are *too* ingenious to be convincing. Heaven and earth have to conspire with the murderer to get them to work. No one in his senses would stake his neck on a combination of luck and coincidence against which any fool could see that the chances were astronomical. And Mr. Carr's murderers are not madmen or even fools; they have to be clever men to work out the intricate details of their crimes. Detective literature is not so divorced from reality as to tolerate such absurdity. The proper place for Mr. Carr's notions is a book of conundrums.

Secrets Can't Be Kept is the twentieth of the Bobby Owen series and is constructed on the same principle as the previous nineteen. A hideous snarl of tangled humanity is presented to Bobby to unravel with the acquired knowledge that most of the threads are quite disconnected and lead nowhere near the murder he has to solve. These loose threads spoil the unity of Mr. Punshon's plots; but without them his murderers would be too plainly labelled. *Secrets Can't Be Kept* opens with a call at Bobby's office by a cripple, who has been snooping around Wychshire. Bobby refuses his offer to trade information; and the cripple disappears—for good, leaving a strong smell of blackmail in the air. A baronet, a clergyman, a painter, an Army officer, a music-hall performer, some love interest and some stolen jewellery are all involved. But the reader is soon saved any further trouble by the gift of an enormous clue, and can leave Bobby to finish alone.

My Father Sleeps is a gallop round the Highlands with that old sleuth-hound Mrs. Bradley, and a Gaelic war-cry at the head of each chapter to flog us on. What with the lochs and the glens and the clans and the Gaelic, it is a relief to meet a gentleman who leaps across the room like a jaguar. I found out that one or two of the murders we are investigating date from 1919; but don't let that deter you. Time and space mean nothing to Mrs. Bradley. Miss Mitchell writes the strangest detection, but her surrealist style finds its adherents. I'm sure they will all enjoy *My Father Sleeps*.

Spyracket is a straightforward before-D-Day thriller, written in the colourless style adopted by modern shockers. The contrast between the flat narrative and the hectic action is meant to be automatically piquant, if it means anything. It is difficult to tell with these products, designed for a chain-reading public without discrimination, whether the similarity is due to deliberate imitation or labour-saving devices. The general effect is of books written while asleep for people who read in their sleep.

The President Died At Noon is the old-fashioned thriller with a lovely lady in the grip of a huge hypnotic villain and the rest of the bag of tricks. The scene is pre-war Paris, where a bogus cancer cure leads indirectly to the assassination of President Doumer in 1932. Mr. Borodin rattles off his plot, but his facility is wasted in writing down to this melodramatic level.

RALPH PARTRIDGE

WAR DOCUMENTARIES

Merchantmen at War. *H.M. Stationery Office.* 1s. 9d.
The Air Battle of Malta. *H.M. Stationery Office.* 1s.
Malta Besieged. By R. LESLIE OLIVER. *Hutchinson.* 15s.

Thanks chiefly to three films—*Merchant Seamen*, *San Demetrio* and *Western Approaches*—the achievements and hardships of the Merchant Navy are now as familiar to us as any phase of the war. Their battle has been continuous: nine hours after the declaration of war, the liner *Athenia* was torpedoed 200 miles off the Irish coast, and there are indications at the moment of a renewed U-boat offensive in the Atlantic. There is a world-map in *Merchantmen at War*, showing the main sea routes and the risks attached to them. Apart from mine-fields and natural hazards, the attack may come from aeroplanes, surface raiders or submarines. The danger areas on the map cover more than nine-tenths of this vast sea-mileage. The most bitterly attacked convoys were those travelling to Malta in 1942, when the Mediterranean was in Axis hands;

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and at the same time traffic from Clyde to Suez was making the incredible journey of 11,600 sea miles round the Cape. *Merchantmen at War* gives a vivid general picture of our supply lines—whose extent may surprise even the reader to-day—and we are told what each of those lines means in terms of human experience and bloodshed. Men adrift for 30 days in open boats or on rafts; the tanker on the way to Murmansk that gets frozen round every night, so that its men can walk across the ice to other tankers; "the device called P.A.C. which throws up a wire many hundreds of feet" to catch low-diving aircraft; the *Franche Comté* which, like the *San Demetrio*, was brought back to port, with 11,000 tons of oil aboard, after being torpedoed, set on fire and abandoned; icebergs, fogs, U-boat packs, Stukas, seas going up to fifty feet; the armada on D-Day proceeding with clockwork regularity along a channel only 400 feet wide: these are a few of the incidents from a battle lasting over five years. *Merchantmen at War* is crammed with anecdote, has superb illustrations, and obviously its author has spent many hours talking (or listening) to seamen of all kinds. Coastal defence is left for another volume in this series.

That Malta should have survived the fall of France and Italy's entry into the war, is even more surprising than our own survival at the same period. The air battle of Malta began with four Gladiator fighters against the Italian air force, and when the battle reached its climax in May, 1942, with Spitfires (still very few) against Junkers and Messerschmitts, it is difficult to see why the island was not invaded. According to an officer quoted in Mr. Leslie Oliver's *Malta Besieged*, invasion at that moment would have been "a piece of cake" for the enemy. However, they stopped short. The toughness of everyone, from fighter pilots to A.A. gunners who sometimes lacked ammunition, no doubt misled Kesselring into believing the island more impregnable than in fact it was. In two and a quarter years, the island had 3,215 alerts. *The Air Battle of Malta* does justice to this extraordinary siege, and stresses also the importance of Malta, even during the worst onslaughts, as an offensive base. The official account, like the others in the series, tells its story vividly and authoritatively, and with the usual wealth of illustration. These M.o.I. documentaries compiled for Government departments are, necessarily, the only best-sellers in wartime, and one wonders how far the standards set by them will be carried over into the peace years. Or shall we confine ourselves again to the mitigated thrills of the White Paper?

Malta Besieged has the advantage of being written by a journalist who was on the spot, but by comparison with the Government publication this is a muddled, pompous, badly written account. However, it has here and there interesting detail: the list of meagre rations, for example, obtainable at the height of the siege. According to Mr. Oliver, the fighting forces at this time, when they worked their hardest, had the same rations as civilians.

G. W. STONIER

GRAMOPHONE NOTES

BEETHOVEN: *Concerto No. 3 in C minor*. Solomon, with B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra, cond. Boult (H.M.V. DB6196–9).

BARBER: *Adagio for Strings*. N.B.C. Symphony Orch., cond. Toscanini (H.M.V. DB6180).

GLUCK-MOTTL: *Ballet Suite*. Boston Promenade Orch. (HMV. C3420–1).

CHOPIN: *Waltz in C sharp minor*, and *Impromptu in A flat*. Kentner (Col. DX1081).

HANDEL: "With Thee the Unsheltered Moor" (*Solomon*), and
MOZART: "A Maiden's in an Evil Plight" (*La Finta Giardiniera*). Isobel Baillie, with City of Birmingham Orch., cond. Cameron (Col. DX1080).

ORR (Robin): *Sonatine for Violin and Piano*. Max Rostal and Franz Osborn (Decca K1112).

There are occasions when we are all apt to ride our hobby-horses to death, and in his destructive criticism of conventional musical opinion Donald Tovey sometimes allowed his zeal to outrun his discretion. The classical case of this is his pettifogging analysis of the opening ritornello in Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto. Ever since its appearance composers have regarded this work as the most fully and clearly developed example of classical concerto form in existence; but Tovey pokes fun at them for doing so on the grounds that in the exposition of the second subject Beethoven was led astray into several bars of symphonic development such as ought not to occur in a mere ritornello. This seems to me wildly fussy. The modulation from E flat into C major, of which Tovey complains, is surely nothing more serious than a momentary emphasis which serves, moreover, to smooth out the transition back to the original key, for the entry of the piano. In any case the result is peculiarly beautiful and does nothing to detract from the Palladian proportions of this superb concerto, which has the high seriousness almost always associated with the key of C minor. Of his three first concertos, this is the one to which Beethoven attached most weight, and in view of his confessed admiration for Mozart's great C minor Concerto (his most tremendous work in this form), readers will find a close comparison of the two works capital for the understanding, both of symphonic development and of the complicated relationship between Mozart and Beethoven. It would be hard to over-praise either the performance or the recording of this set. Solomon's playing is a model of gravity and refinement; he has chosen Clara Schumann's cadenza, which happens to be perfectly in style and free from the febrile romantic quality which spoils her cadenzas to the G major Concerto for any pianist other than herself.

Samuel Barber's *Adagio* is rather a puzzling little piece. Like his *Essay* for orchestra, it is a six-minute movement, the singularity of which seems belied by its deep seriousness. Ought this, not, we feel, to be part of a symphony? After several playings, however, the form becomes clearer: this music is, in fact, a poem in short stanzas; only the intensity of feeling misleads us into supposing it symphonic. Nobody need assume that this is difficult music: the idiom is no harsher or more "modern" than that of Sibelius, though the composer with whom Barber seems to have most in common is Shostakovitch. Once again we are gripped and entranced by the sheer power and tensity which string playing always seems to achieve at the hands of Toscanini. This is an issue for which we have every reason to be grateful.

The records made by the Boston Promenade Orchestra usually have a coarse stridency that makes it difficult to tell if the music is being well or badly played. But this is an exception and will give pleasure. Mottl was, of course, a dyed-in-the-wool Wagnerian, which renders his refurbishing of Gluck slightly suspect; but there is no denying the captivating quality of this suite.

Kentner's recent Chopin recordings have been a great improvement on earlier ones, which had a vulgar glitter quite out of keeping with the spirit of the music. The A flat Impromptu is not, I think, among Chopin's most thoughtful achievements; but the C sharp minor Waltz is a poetic masterpiece, and the pianist makes us feel this, through a performance full of an intimate delicacy of phrasing and dynamics which perfect

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presses the passionate melancholy of the spiration.

It would be ungenerous to deny that, for a boy eighteen, *La Finta Giardiniera* is an extraordinary feat. Equally idle to pretend that it is t musically rather flimsy. Compare the two des of Miss Baillie's new record and you will, think, be struck by the monotonous tessitura the young Mozart's aria. The wonderful xibility and expressiveness, shown by Handel the air from *Solomon*, were not long in coming Mozart; but we do not find it here. On the her hand, freshness and transparency make the ia still worth the trouble of singing.

Max Rostal and Franz Osborn put all their usicianship and technique to the task of comunicating whatever Robin Orr's *Sonatine* may ve to say to us. With the best will—and I ink no one will accuse me of lacking symthy with young musicians—I cannot see the ject of *recording* this arid and pointless little ork. By all means let the Committee for the omotion of New Music see that these young ople get a chance to hear their own work; t publication, in any form, is a more serious atter, and I cannot feel that the Committee has far justified its choice.

EDWARD SACKVILLE WEST

Week-end Competition

No. 786

t by Nym

The usual prizes are offered for a letter of about o words sent by a periodical editor to "Constant eader," who has just written setting out his reasons r transferring his patronage to another journal. ntries by March 5.

ESULT OF COMPETITION No. 783

t by Fred Oyster

We offer the usual prizes for the best extract (not exceeding 200 words) from a novel written in 2000 A.D. Psychological and social changes rather than mechanical discoveries should be indicated.

eport by Fred Oyster

Some of the situations: the heroine weeps over letter from her young man saying that the Matrionial Board have plucked him (James J. Nevin). . . . Ashdale Modern School it is whispered that one of e new boys comes from Eton, "the repressive place at closed recently" (L.A/C. D. J. Culham). . . Advertisement in *London Gazette* (Matrimonial Edition) for April, 2000: "Young war widow (49 last birthday), requires respectable, intelligent husband. Must possess the necessary first-class diplomas, housemanagement, home nursing, first aid, economical shopping, etc. Two male maids kept" (Jas. J. Niven). . . . The serial has come back with novelists reading their own work by television (S. W. G.). . . . The Prime Minister of the day is disturbed because the whole Western Bloc seethes with non-violent resistance—"Is this," he asks, "a time to declare yourself a conscientious objector to compulsory pacifism?" (Stanley J. Sharpless). . . . France and England have become one, as have also Russia and Germany (Sir Robert Witt). . . . There has been a last war to destroy those who support the right of privacy (L. J.). . . . The human Stud Farm has arrived. . . . Mr. Gerald Heard is Archbishop of the Globe. . . . The Civil Service and the Black Market have triumphed, and according to some prophets, amalgamated.

Competitors were full of ingenious ideas—usually horrific—but not so neat in formulating them. Leslie Johnson and Peter Alexander deserve mention for having a shot at the style that will distinguish novels in the 2000's. "Jonsun wandering wondered watching sparkling sun on prefabricated steel and prefirebrickated asbestos" suggests a possible development. But L. E. J. came easily first in this line with his ending to a best-seller. He shares the prizes equally with A. M. P., Able Seaman J. R. Till, and "Diago."

PRIZES

He took her in his trong arms. "Darling," he wispud.

There lips met.

Out ov dors, pring had cum agen.

THE END L. E. J.

"Charles, darling, I simply can't go to school to-day." "Oh, but mother, you must. You missed last week. Gran has gone already."

"Oh, Gran," said Lydia, "she loves school. Good for her the leaving age is now 80, but I hate to think of forty more years doing vulgar fractions. Actually, Charles"—and here Lydia's bright eyes dropped—"I have an appointment on Planet A to-day."

"Mother," said Charles severely, "you're in love with the Planet A man. A creature made only of earth, air, fire and water. What was my father like, can you recall?"

"Your father," Lydia began, tossing back her radiant body which, since she mentioned Planet A, seemed ever so faintly composed of silver flutes of the air and striped sunbeams, "your father was earthy, old-fashioned, incredibly so. I believe he had something called a golf handicap, and he was fond of his port. And I was afraid of him. Thank God, Charles, that *fear* has disappeared from our world."

A. M. P.

The Bishop of Greater London looked gloomily out on to the sea. She was worried. There hadn't been a christening in S.W.179 for twenty years; the script of her sermon on Original Maladjustment (later quoted in the "This Hemisphere" column of the *Old Statesman*) was still in h censor's in-tray at the Ministry of Fuel and Integration; her manservant was doing post-graduate research on divorce rites among the aboriginals of California; and her husband, after six months' prosperity, was now back at work. All very glucose-making.

The sentry opened the door to admit a man. Although beardless his appearance was otherwise conventional, his white shorts making a striking contrast to the Bishop's well-tailored purple trousers. On his chest was a faded ribbon won during the Freedom from Privacy campaign of '63. The only thing he had in common with the Bishop was membership of the Civil Service.

The man burst into tears. "Pity me, wife," he whimpered. "It's those beastly card-indexes. I'm left with twenty-three eugenically-approved young men on my hands. Perfect measurements, ballot-papers sound, and they've passed their social foresight test with flying colours. Yet I can't get a single one of them mated. What on earth's become of all the women?"

"There's a war on," muttered the Bishop.

ABLE-SEAMAN J. R. TILL

Laminaria left me in the study to await the return of her father from sex visiting. After a while the door opened and the Vicar, her father, entered, dressed in scarlet kilts and black hood. Seeing me at rest on the divan in front of the fire, he gave no recognition, but busied himself with papers taken from his pocket.

"It was some time before he asked me about my sex life, and on hearing showed no surprise. He mentioned he was preparing the monthly report for the Bishopess of the Diocese, on the unconscious lives of his parishioners from whom during the day he had collected their recent dreams; he thought the account would be tolerably interesting.

He could not speak too highly of the attractions of the Bishopess; it was obvious he had a fixation towards her immaculate knee breeches and gaiters.

"DIAGO"

Personal

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